ERSKINE DALE PIONEER

By JOHN FOX Jr.

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THE HEART OF THE HILLS

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

CRITTENDEN. A Kentucky Story of Love and War

THE KENTUCKIANS AND A KNIGHT OF THE CUMBERLAND

A MOUNTAIN EUROPA AND A CUMBERLAND VENDETTA

CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME, HELL-FER-SARTAIN AND IN HAPPY VALLEY

BLUE GRASS AND RHODODENDRON
Outdoor Life in Kentucky

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

The third attempt, with a moment, bowed over her hand, and kissed it

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BY

JOHN FOX, JR.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. C. YOHN

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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I

Streaks of red ran upward, and in answer the great gray eye of the wilderness lifted its mist-fringed lid. From the green depths came the fluting of a lone wood-thrush. Through them an owl flew on velvety wings for his home in the heart of a primeval poplar. A cougar leaped from the low limb of an oak, missed, and a shuddering deer streaked through a forest aisle, bounded into a little clearing, stopped rigid, sniffed a deadlier enemy, and whirled into the wilderness again. Still deeper in the depths a boy with a bow and arrow and naked, except for scalp-lock and breech-clout, sprang from sleep and again took flight along a buffalo trail. Again, not far behind him, three grunting savages were taking up the print of his moccasined feet.

An hour before a red flare rose within

the staked enclosure that was reared in the centre of the little clearing, and above it smoke was soon rising. Before the first glimmer of day the gates yawned a little and three dim shapes appeared and moved leisurely for the woods—each man with a long flint-lock rifle in the hollow of his arm, a hunting-knife in his belt, and a coonskin cap on his head. At either end of the stockade a watch-tower of oak became visible and in each a sleepy sentinel yawned and sniffed the welcome smell of frying venison below him. In the pound at one end of the fort, and close to the eastern side, a horse whinnied, and a few minutes later when a boy slipped through the gates with feed in his arms there was more whinnying and the stamping of impatient feet.

"Gol darn ye!" the boy yelled, "can't ye wait till a feller gits *his* breakfast?"

A voice deep, lazy, and resonant came from the watch-tower above:

"Well, I'm purty hungry myself."

"See any Injuns, Dave?"

"Not more'n a thousand or two, I reckon." The boy laughed:

"Well, I reckon you won't see any while I'm around—they're afeerd o' *me*."

"I don't blame 'em, Bud. I reckon that blunderbuss o' yours would come might' nigh goin' through a pat o' butter at twenty yards." The sentinel rose towering to the full of his stature, stretched his mighty arms with a yawn, and lightly leaped, rifle in hand, into the enclosure. A girl climbing the rude ladder to the tower stopped midway.

"Mornin', Dave!"

"Mornin', Polly!"

"I was comin' to wake you up," she smiled.

"I just waked up," he yawned, humoring the jest.

"You don't seem to have much use for this ladder."

"Not unless I'm goin' up; and I wouldn't then if I could jump as high as I can fall." He went toward her to help her down.

"I wouldn't climb very high," she said, and scorning his hand with a tantalizing little grimace she leaped as lightly as had he to the ground. Two older women who sat about a kettle of steaming clothes watched her.

"Look at Polly Conrad, won't ye? I declare that gal——"

"Lyddy!" cried Polly, "bring Dave's breakfast!"

At the door of each log cabin, as solidly built as a little fort, a hunter was cleaning a long rifle. At the western angle two men were strengthening the pickets of the palisade. About the fire two mothers were suckling babes at naked breasts. A boy was stringing a bow, and another was hurling a small tomahawk at an oaken post, while a third who was carrying wood for the open fire cried hotly:

"Come on here, you two, an' he'p me with this wood!" And grumbling they came, for that fort harbored no idler, irrespective of age or sex.

At the fire a tall girl rose, pushed a mass of sunburned hair from her heated forehead, and a flush not from the fire fused with her smile.

"I reckon Dave can walk this far—he don't look very puny."

A voice vibrant with sarcasm rose from one of the women about the steaming kettle.

"Honor!" she cried, "Honor Sanders!"

In a doorway near, a third girl was framed —deep-eyed, deep-breasted.

"Honor!" cried the old woman, "stop wastin' yo' time with that weavin' in thar an' come out here an' he'p these two gals to git Dave his breakfast." Dave Yandell laughed loudly.

"Come on, Honor," he called, but the girl turned and the whir of a loom started again like the humming of bees. Lydia Noe handed the hunter a pan of deer-meat and corn bread, and Polly poured him a cup of steaming liquid made from sassafras leaves. Unheeding for a moment the food in his lap, Dave looked up into Polly's black eyes, shifted to Lydia, swerved to the door whence came the whir of the loom.

"You are looking very handsome this morning, Polly," he said gravely, "and Lydia is lovelier even than usual, and Honor is a woodland dream." He shook his head. "No," he said, "I really couldn't."

"Couldn't what?" asked Polly, though she knew some nonsense was coming.

"Be happy even with two, if t'other were far away."

"I reckon you'll have to try some day—with all of us far away," said the gentle Lydia.

"No doubt, no doubt." He fell upon his breakfast.

"Purple, crimson, and gold—daughters of the sun—such are not for the poor hunter—alack, alack!"

"Poor boy!" said Lydia, and Polly looked at her with quickening wonder. Rallying Dave with soft-voiced mockery was a new phase in Lydia. Dave gave his hunting-knife a pathetic flourish.

"And when the Virginia gallants come, where will poor Dave be?"

Polly's answer cut with sarcasm, but not at Dave.

"Dave will be busy cuttin' wood an' killin' food for 'em—an' keepin' 'em from gettin' scalped by Indians."

"I wonder," said Lydia, "if they'll have long hair like Dave?" Dave shook his long locks with mock pride.

"Yes, but it won't be their own an' it'll be *powdered*."

"Lord, I'd like to see the first Indian who takes one of their scalps." Polly laughed,

but there was a shudder in Lydia's smile. Dave rose.

"I'm goin' to sleep till dinner—don't let anybody wake me," he said, and at once both the girls were serious and kind.

"We won't, Dave."

Cow-bells began to clang at the edge of the forest.

"There they are," cried Polly. "Come on, Lyddy."

The two girls picked up piggins and squeezed through the opening between the heavy gates. The young hunter entered a door and within threw himself across a rude bed, face down.

"Honor!" cried one of the old women, "you go an' git a bucket o' water." The whir stopped instantly, the girl stepped with a sort of slow majesty from the cabin, and, entering the next, paused on the threshold as her eyes caught the powerful figure stretched on the bed and already in heavy sleep. As she stepped softly for the bucket she could not forbear another shy swift glance; she felt the flush in her face and to conceal it she turned her head angrily when she came out.

A few minutes later she was at the spring and ladling water into her pail with a gourd. Near by the other two girls were milking—each with her forehead against the soft flank of a dun-colored cow whose hoofs were stained with the juice of wild strawberries. Honor dipped lazily. When her bucket was full she fell a-dreaming, and when the girls were through with their task they turned to find her with deep, unseeing eyes on the dark wilderness.

"Boo!" cried Polly, startling her, and then teasingly:

"Are you in love with Dave, too, Honor?"

The girl reddened.

"No," she whipped out, "an' I ain t goin' to be." And then she reddened again angrily as Polly's hearty laugh told her she had given herself away. For a moment the three stood like wood-nymphs about the spring, vigorous, clear-eyed, richly dowered with health and color and body and limb—typical mothers-to-be of a wilderness race. And as Honor turned abruptly for the fort, a shot came from the woods followed by a

war-whoop that stopped the blood shuddering in their veins.

"Oh, my God!" each cried, and catching at their wet skirts they fled in terror through the long grass. They heard the quick commotion in the fort, heard sharp commands, cries of warning, frantic calls for them to hurry, saw strained faces at the gates, saw Dave bound through and rush toward them. And from the forest there was nothing but its silence until that was again broken—this time by a loud laugh—the laugh of a white man. Then at the edge of the wilderness appeared—the fool. Behind him followed the other two who had gone out that morning, one with a deer swung about his shoulders, and all could hear the oaths of both as they cursed the fool in front who had given shot and war-whoop to frighten women and make them run. Dave stood still, but his lips, too, were busy with curses, and from the fort came curses—an avalanche of them. The sickly smile passed from the face of the fellow, shame took its place, and when he fronted the terrible eyes of old Jerome Sanders at the gate, that face grew white with fear.

"Thar ain't an Injun in a hundred miles," he stammered, and then he shrank down as though he were almost going to his knees, when suddenly old Jerome slipped his long rifle from his shoulder and fired past the fellow's head with a simultaneous roar of command:

"Git in—ever'body—git in—quick!"

From a watch-tower, too, a rifle had cracked. A naked savage had bounded into a spot of sunlight that quivered on the buffalo trail a hundred yards deep in the forest and leaped lithely aside into the bushes—both rifles had missed. Deeper from the woods came two war-whoops—real ones—and in the silence that followed the gates were swiftly closed and barred, and a keen-eyed rifleman was at every port-hole in the fort. From the tower old Jerome saw reeds begin to shake in a cane-brake to the left of the spring.

"Look thar!" he called, and three rifles, with his own, covered the spot. A small brown arm was thrust above the shaking reeds, with the palm of the hand toward the fort—the peace sign of the Indian—and a

moment later a naked boy sprang from the cane-brake and ran toward the blockhouse, with a bow and arrow in his left hand and his right stretched above his head, its pleading palm still outward.

"Don't shoot!—don't nobody shoot!" shouted the old man. No shot came from the fort, but from the woods came yells of rage, and as the boy streaked through the clearing an arrow whistled past his head.

"Let him in!" shouted Jerome, and as Dave opened the gates another arrow hurtled between the boy's upraised arm and his body and stuck quivering in one of its upright bars. The boy slid through and stood panting, shrinking, wild-eyed. The arrow had grazed his skin, and when Dave lifted his arm and looked at the oozing drops of blood he gave a startled oath, for he saw a flash of white under the loosened breech-clout below. The boy understood. Quickly he pushed the clout aside on his thigh that all might see, nodded gravely, and proudly tapped his breast.

"Paleface!" he half grunted, "white man!"

The wilds were quiet. The boy pointed

to them and held up three fingers to indicate that there were only three red men there, and shook his head to say there would be no attack from them. Old Jerome studied the little stranger closely, wondering what new trick those red devils were trying now to play. Mother Sanders and Mother Noe, the boys of the fort, the gigantic brothers to Lydia, Adam and Noel, the three girls had gathered about him, as he stood with the innocence of Eden before the fall.

"The fust thing to do," said Mother Sanders, "is to git some clothes for the little heathen." Whereat Lydia flushed and Dave made an impatient gesture for silence.

"What's your name?" The boy shook his head and looked eagerly around.

"Français—French?" he asked, and in turn the big woodsman shook his head—nobody there spoke French. However, Dave knew a little Shawnee, a good deal of the sign-language, and the boy seemed to understand a good many words in English; so that the big woodsman pieced out his story with considerable accuracy, and turned to tell it to Jerome. The Indians had crossed the Big

River, were as many as the leaves, and meant to attack the whites. For the first time they had allowed the boy to go on a war-party. Some one had treated him badly—he pointed out the bruises of cuffs and kicks on his body. The Indians called him White Arrow, and he knew he was white from the girdle of untanned skin under his breech-clout and because the Indian boys taunted him. Asked why he had come to the fort, he pointed again to his bruises, put both hands against his breast, and stretched them wide as though he would seek shelter in the arms of his own race and take them to his heart; and for the first time a smile came to his face that showed him plainly as a curious product of his race and the savage forces that for years had been moulding him. That smile could have never come to the face of an Indian. No Indian would ever have so lost himself in his own emotions. No white man would have used his gestures and the symbols of nature to which he appealed. Only an Indian could have shown such a cruel, vindictive, merciless fire in his eyes when he told of his wrongs, and when he saw tears in Lydia's eyes, the

first burning in his life came to his own, and brushing across them with fierce shame he turned Indian stoic again and stood with his arms folded over his bow and arrows at his breast, looking neither to right nor left, as though he were waiting for judgment at their hands and cared little what his fate might be, as perfect from head to foot as a statue of the ancient little god, who, in him, had forsaken the couches of love for the tents of war.

II

All turned now to the duties of the day—Honor to her loom, Polly to her distaff, and Lydia to her spinning-wheel, for the clothes of the women were home-spun, home-woven, home-made. Old Jerome and Dave and the older men gathered in one corner of the stockade for a council of war. The boy had made it plain that the attacking party was at least two days behind the three Indians from whom he had escaped, so that there was no danger that day, and they could wait until night to send messengers to warn the settlers outside to seek safety within the fort. Meanwhile, Jerome would despatch five men with Dave to scout for the three Indians who might be near by in the woods, and the boy, who saw them slip out the rear gate of the fort, at once knew their purpose, shook his head, and waved his hand to say that his late friends were gone back to hurry on the big war-party to the attack, now that the whites

themselves knew their danger. Old Jerome nodded that he understood, and nodded to others his appreciation of the sense and keenness of the lad, but he let the men go just the same. From cabin door to cabin door the boy went in turn—peeking in, but showing no wonder, no surprise, and little interest until Lydia again smiled at him. At her door he paused longest, and even went within and bent his ear to the bee-like hum of the wheel. At the port-holes in the logs he pointed and grunted his understanding and appreciation, as he did when he climbed into a blockhouse and saw how one story overlapped the other and how through an opening in the upper floor the defenders in the tower might pour a destructive fire on attackers breaking in below. When he came down three boys, brothers to the three girls, Bud Sanders, Jack Conrad, and Harry Noe, were again busy with their games. They had been shy with him as he with them, and now he stood to one side while they, pretending to be unconscious of his presence, watched with sidelong glances the effect on him of their prowess. All three threw the tomahawk

and shot arrows with great skill, but they did not dent the impassive face of the little stranger.

"Maybe he thinks he can do better," said Bud; "let's let him try it."

And he held forth the tomahawk and motioned toward the post. The lad took it gravely, gravely reached for the tomahawk of each of the other two, and with slow dignity walked several yards farther away from the mark. Then he wheeled with such ferocity in his face that the boys shrank aside, clutching with some fear to one another's arms, and before they could quite recover, they were gulping down wonder as the three weapons whistled through the air and were quivering close, side by side, in the post.

"Gee!" they said. Again the lad's face turned impassive as he picked up his bow and three arrows and slowly walked toward the wall of the stockade so that he was the full width of the fort away. And then three arrows hurtled past them in incredibly swift succession and thudded into the post, each just above a tomahawk. This time the three onlookers were quite speechless, though their

mouths were open wide. Then they ran toward him and had him show just how he held tomahawk and bow and arrow, and all three did much better with the new points he gave them. Wondering then whether they might not teach him something, Jack did a standing broad jump and Bud a running broad jump and Harry a hop, skip, and a jump. The young stranger shook his head but he tried and fell short in each event and was greatly mortified. Again he shook his head when Bud and Jack took backholds and had a wrestling-match, but he tried with Jack and was thumped hard to the earth. He sprang to his feet looking angry, but all were laughing, and he laughed too.

"Me big fool," he said; and they showed him how to feint and trip, and once he came near throwing Bud. At rifle-shooting, too, he was no match for the young pioneers, but at last he led them with gestures and unintelligible grunts to the far end of the stockade and indicated a foot-race. The boy ran like one of his own arrows, but he beat Bud only a few feet, and Bud cried:

"I reckon if *I* didn't have no clothes on,

he couldn't 'a' done it"; and on the word Mother Sanders appeared and cried to Bud to bring the "Injun" to her cabin. She had been unearthing clothes for the "little heathen," and Bud helped to put them on. In a few minutes the lad reappeared in fringed hunting shirt and trousers, wriggling in them most uncomfortably, for they made him itch, but at the same time wearing them proudly. Mother Sanders approached with a hunting-knife.

"I'm goin' to cut off that topknot so his hair can ketch up," she said, but the boy scowled fearfully, turned, fled, and scaling the stockade as nimbly as a squirrel, halted on top with one leg over the other side.

"He thinks you air goin' to take his scalp," shouted Bud. The three boys jumped up and down in their glee, and even Mother Sanders put her hands on her broad hips and laughed with such loud heartiness that many came to the cabin doors to see what the matter was. It was no use for the boys to point to their own heads and finger their own shocks of hair, for the lad shook his head, and outraged by their laughter kept his place

in sullen dignity a long while before he could be persuaded to come down.

On the mighty wilderness the sun sank slowly and old Jerome sat in the western tower to watch alone. The silence out there was oppressive and significant, for it meant that the boy's theory was right; the three Indians had gone back for their fellows, and when darkness came the old man sent runners to the outlying cabins to warn the inmates to take refuge within the fort. There was no settler that was not accustomed to a soft tapping on the wooden windows that startled him wide awake. Then there was the noiseless awakening of the household, noiseless dressing of the children—the mere whisper of "Indians" was enough to keep them quiet—and the noiseless slipping through the wilderness for the oak-picketed stockade. And the gathering-in was none too soon. The hooting of owls started before dawn. A flaming arrow hissed from the woods, thudded into the roof of one of the cabins, sputtered feebly on a dew-drenched ridge-pole, and went out. Savage war-whoops rent the air, and the battle was on. All day the fight went

on. There were feints of attack in front and rushes from the rear, and there were rushes from all sides. The women loaded rifles and cooked and cared for the wounded. Thrice an Indian reached the wall of the stockade and set a cabin on fire, but no one of the three got back to the woods alive. The stranger boy sat stoically in the centre of the enclosure watching everything, and making no effort to take part, except twice when he saw a gigantic Indian brandishing his rifle at the edge of the woods, encouraging his companions behind, and each time he grunted and begged for a gun. And Dave made out that the Indian was the one who had treated the boy cruelly and that the lad was after a personal revenge. Late in the afternoon the ammunition began to run low and the muddy discoloration of the river showed that the red men had begun to tunnel under the walls of the fort. And yet a last sally was made just before sunset. A body pushed against Dave in the tower and Dave saw the stranger boy at his side with his bow and arrow. A few minutes later he heard a yell from the lad which rang high over the din, and he saw the feathered tip of

an arrow shaking in the breast of the big Indian who staggered and fell behind a bush. Just at that moment there were yells from the woods behind—the yells of white men that were answered by joyful yells within the fort:

"The Virginians! The Virginians!" And as the rescuers dashed into sight on horse and afoot, Dave saw the lad leap the wall of the stockade and disappear behind the fleeing Indians.

"Gone back to 'em," he grunted to himself. The gates were thrown open. Old Jerome and his men rushed out, and besieged and rescuers poured all their fire after the running Indians, some of whom turned bravely to empty their rifles once more.

"Git in! Git in, quick!" yelled old Joel. He knew another volley would come as soon as the Indians reached the cover of thick woods, and come the volley did. Three men fell—one the leader of the Virginians, whose head flopped forward as he entered the gate and was caught in old Joel's arms. Not another sound came from the woods, but again Dave from the tower saw the cane-brush rustle at the edge of a thicket, saw a hand

thrust upward with the palm of peace toward the fort, and again the stranger boy emerged —this time with a bloody scalp dangling in his left hand. Dave sprang down and met him at the gate. The boy shook his bow and arrow proudly, pointed to a crisscross scar on the scalp, and Dave made out from his explanation that once before the lad had tried to kill his tormentor and that the scar was the sign. In the centre of the enclosure the wounded Virginian lay, and when old Jerome stripped the shirt from his breast he shook his head gravely. The wounded man opened his eyes just in time to see and he smiled.

"I know it," he said faintly, and then his eyes caught the boy with the scalp, were fixed steadily and began to widen.

"Who is that boy?" he asked sharply.

"Never mind now," said old Joel soothingly, "you must keep still!" The boy's eyes had begun to shift under the scrutiny and he started away.

"Come back here!" commanded the wounded man, and still searching the lad he said sharply again:

"Who is that boy?" Nor would he have his wound dressed or even take the cup of water handed to him until old Joel briefly told the story, when he lay back on the ground and closed his eyes.

Darkness fell. In each tower a watcher kept his eyes strained toward the black, silent woods. The dying man was laid on a rude bed within one cabin, and old Joel lay on the floor of it close to the door. The stranger lad refused to sleep indoors and huddled himself in a blanket on the ground in one corner of the stockade. Men, women, and children fell to a deep and weary sleep. In the centre the fire burned and there was no sound on the air but the crackle of its blazing. An hour later the boy in the corner threw aside his blanket, and when, a moment later, Lydia Noe, feverish and thirsty, rose from her bed to get a drink of water outside her door, she stopped short on the threshold. The lad, stark naked but for his breech-clout and swinging his bloody scalp over his head, was stamping around the fire—dancing the scalp-dance of the savage to a low, fierce, guttural song. The boy saw her, saw her

face in the blaze, stricken white with fright and horror, saw her too paralyzed to move and he stopped, staring at her a moment with savage rage, and went on again. Old Joel's body filled the next doorway. He called out with a harsh oath, and again the boy stopped. With another oath and a threatening gesture Joel motioned to the corner of the stockade, and with a flare of defiance in his black eyes the lad stalked slowly and proudly away. From behind him the voice of the wounded man called, and old Joel turned. There was a ghastly smile on the Virginian's pallid face.

"I saw it," he said painfully. "That's—that's my son!"

III

From the sun-dial on the edge of the high bank, straight above the brim of the majestic yellow James, a noble path of thick grass as broad as a modern highway ran hundreds of yards between hedges of roses straight to the open door of the great manor-house with its wide verandas and mighty pillars set deep back from the river in a grove of ancient oaks. Behind the house spread a little kingdom, divided into fields of grass, wheat, tobacco, and corn, and dotted with white-washed cabins filled with slaves. Already the house had been built a hundred years of brick brought from England in the builder's own ships, it was said, and the second son of the reigning generation, one Colonel Dale, sat in the veranda alone. He was a royalist officer, this second son, but his elder brother had the spirit of daring and adventure that should have been his, and he had been sitting there four years before when that elder brother

came home from his first pioneering trip into the wilds, to tell that his wife was dead and their only son was a captive among the Indians. Two years later still, word came that the father, too, had met death from the savages, and the little kingdom passed into Colonel Dale's hands.

Indentured servants, as well as blacks from Africa, had labored on that path in front of him; and up it had once stalked a deputation of the great Powhatan's red tribes. Up that path had come the last of the early colonial dames, in huge ruffs, high-heeled shoes, and short skirts, with her husband, who was the "head of a hundred," with gold on his clothes, and at once military commander, civil magistrate, judge, and executive of the community; had come officers in gold lace, who had been rowed up in barges from Jamestown; members of the worshipful House of Burgesses; bluff planters in silk coats, the governor and members of the council; distinguished visitors from England, colonial gentlemen and ladies. At the manor they had got beef, bacon, brown loaves, Indian corn-cakes, strong ales, and strong waters

(but no tea or coffee), and "drunk" pipes of tobacco from lily-pots—jars of white earth—lighted with splinters of juniper, or coals of fire plucked from the fireplace with a pair of silver tongs. And all was English still—books, clothes, plates, knives, and forks; the church, the Church of England; the Governor, the representative of the King; his Council, the English House of Lords; the Burgesses, the English Parliament—socially aristocratic, politically republican. For ancient usage held that all "freemen" should have a voice in the elections, have equal right to say who the lawmakers and what the law. The way was open as now. Any man could get two thousand acres by service to the colony, could build, plough, reap, save, buy servants, and roll in his own coach to sit as burgess. There was but one seat of learning —at Williamsburg. What culture they had they brought from England or got from parents or minister. And always they had seemed to prefer sword and stump to the pen. They hated towns. At every wharf a long shaky trestle ran from a warehouse out into the river to load ships with tobacco for Eng-

land and to get in return all conveniences and luxuries, and that was enough. In towns men jostled and individual freedom was lost, so, Ho! for the great sweeps of land and the sway of a territorial lord! Englishmen they were of Shakespeare's time but living in Virginia, and that is all they were—save that the flower of liberty was growing faster in the new-world soil.

The plantation went back to a patent from the king in 1617, and by the grant the first stout captain was to "enjoy his landes in as large and ample manner to all intentes and purposes as any Lord of any manours in England doth hold his grounde." This gentleman was the only man after the "Starving Time" to protest against the abandonment of Jamestown in 1610. When, two years later, he sent two henchmen as burgesses to the first general assembly, that august body would not allow them to sit unless the captain would relinquish certain high privileges in his grant.

"I hold my patent for service done," the captain answered grandiloquently, "which noe newe or late comers can meritt or chal-

lenge," and only with the greatest difficulty was he finally persuaded to surrender his high authority. In that day the house was built of wood, protected by a palisade, prescribed by law, and the windows had stout shutters. Everything within it had come from England. The books were ponderous folios, stout duodecimos encased in embossed leather, and among them was a folio containing Master William Shakespeare's dramas, collected by his fellow actors Hemirge and Condell. Later by many years a frame house supplanted this primitive, fort-like homestead, and early in the eighteenth century, after several generations had been educated in England, an heir built the noble manor as it still stands—an accomplished gentleman with lace collar, slashed doublet, and sable silvered hair, a combination of scholar, courtier, and soldier. And such had been the master of the little kingdom ever since.

In the earliest days the highest and reddest cedars in the world rose above the underbrush. The wild vines were so full of grape bunches that the very turf overflowed with them. Deer, turkeys, and snow-white cranes

were in incredible abundance. The shores were fringed with verdure. The Indians were a "kind, loving people." Englishmen called it the "Good Land," and found it "most plentiful, sweet, wholesome, and fruitful of all others." The east was the ocean; Florida was the south; the north was Nova Francia, and the west unknown. Only the shores touched the interior, which was an untravelled realm of fairer fruits and flowers than in England; green shores, majestic forests, and blue mountains filled with gold and jewels. Bright birds flitted, dusky maids danced and beckoned, rivers ran over golden sand, and toward the South Sea was the Fount of Youth, whose waters made the aged young again. Bermuda Islands were an enchanted den full of furies and devils which all men did shun as hell and perdition. And the feet of all who had made history had trod that broad path to the owner's heart and home.

Down it now came a little girl—the flower of all those dead and gone—and her coming was just as though one of the flowers about her had stepped from its gay company on one or the other side of the path to make through

them a dainty, triumphal march as the fairest of them all. At the dial she paused and her impatient blue eyes turned to a bend of the yellow river for the first glimpse of a gay barge that soon must come. At the wharf the song of negroes rose as they unloaded the boat just from Richmond. She would go and see if there was not a package for her mother and perhaps a present for herself, so with another look to the river bend she turned, but she moved no farther. Instead, she gave a little gasp, in which there was no fear, though what she saw was surely startling enough to have made her wheel in flight. Instead, she gazed steadily into a pair of grave black eyes that were fixed on her from under a green branch that overhung the footpath, and steadily she searched the figure standing there, from the coonskin cap down the fringed hunting-shirt and fringed breeches to the moccasined feet. And still the strange figure stood arms folded, motionless and silent. Neither the attitude nor the silence was quite pleasing, and the girl's supple slenderness stiffened, her arms went rigidly to her sides, and a haughty little snap sent her undimpled chin upward.

"What do you want?"

And still he looked, searching her in turn from head to foot, for he was no more strange to her than she was to him.

"Who are you and what do you want?"

It was a new way for a woman to speak to a man; he in turn was not pleased, and a gleam in his eyes showed it.

"I am the son of a king."

She started to laugh, but grew puzzled, for she had the blood of Pocahontas herself.

"You are an Indian?"

He shook his head, scorning to explain, dropped his rifle to the hollow of his arm, and, reaching for his belt where she saw the buckhorn handle of a hunting-knife, came toward her, but she did not flinch. Drawing a letter from the belt, he handed it to her. It was so worn and soiled that she took it daintily and saw on it her father's name. The boy waved his hand toward the house far up the path.

"He live here?"

"You wish to see him?"

The boy grunted assent, and with a shock of resentment the little lady started up the

path with her head very high indeed. The boy slipped noiselessly after her, his face unmoved, but his eyes were darting right and left to the flowers, trees, and bushes, to every flitting, strange bird, the gray streak of a scampering squirrel, and what he could not see, his ears took in—the clanking chains of work-horses, the whir of a quail, the screech of a peacock, the songs of negroes from far-off fields.

On the porch sat a gentleman in powdered wig and knee-breeches, who, lifting his eyes from a copy of *The Spectator* to give an order to a negro servant, saw the two coming, and the first look of bewilderment on his fine face gave way to a tolerant smile. A stray cat or dog, a crippled chicken, a neighbor's child, or a pickaninny—all these his little daughter had brought in at one time or another for a home, and now she had a strange ward, indeed. He asked no question, for a purpose very decided and definite was plainly bringing the little lady on, and he would not have to question. Swiftly she ran up the steps, her mouth primly set, and handed him a letter.

"The messenger is the son of a king"

"The messenger is the son of a king."

"A what?"

"The son of a king," she repeated gravely.

"Ah," said the gentleman, humoring her, "ask his highness to be seated."

His highness was looking from one to the other gravely and keenly. He did not quite understand, but he knew gentle fun was being poked at him, and he dropped sullenly on the edge of the porch and stared in front of him. The little girl saw that his moccasins were much worn and that in one was a hole with the edge blood-stained. And then she began to watch her father's face, which showed that the contents of the letter were astounding him. He rose quickly when he had finished and put out his hand to the stranger.

"I am glad to see you, my boy," he said with great kindness. "Barbara, this is a little kinsman of ours from Kentucky. He was the adopted son of an Indian chief, but by blood he is your own cousin. His name is Erskine Dale."

IV

The little girl rose startled, but her breeding was too fine for betrayal, and she went to him with hand outstretched. The boy took it as he had taken her father's, limply and without rising. The father frowned and smiled —how could the lad have learned manners? And then he, too, saw the hole in the moccasin through which the bleeding had started again.

"You are hurt—you have walked a long way?"

The lad shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Three days—I had to shoot horse."

"Take him into the kitchen, Barbara, and tell Hannah to wash his foot and bandage it."

The boy looked uncomfortable and shook his head, but the little girl was smiling and she told him to come with such sweet imperiousness that he rose helplessly. Old Hannah's eyes made a bewildered start!

"You go on back an' wait for yo' company, little Miss; I'll 'tend to *him!*"

And when the boy still protested, she flared up:

"Looky here, son, little Miss tell me to wash yo' foot, an' I'se gwinter do it, ef I got to tie you fust; now you keep still. Whar you come from?"

His answer was a somewhat haughty grunt that at once touched the quick instincts of the old negress and checked further question. Swiftly and silently she bound his foot, and with great respect she led him to a little room in one ell of the great house in which was a tub of warm water.

"Ole marster say you been travellin' an' mebbe you like to refresh yo'self wid a hot bath. Dar's some o' little marster's clothes on de bed dar, an' a pair o' his shoes, an' I know dey'll jus' fit you snug. You'll find all de folks on de front po'ch when you git through."

She closed the door. Once, winter and summer, the boy had daily plunged into the river with his Indian companions, but he had never had a bath in his life, and he did not know what the word meant; yet he had learned so much at the fort that he had no

trouble making out what the tub of water was for. For the same reason he felt no surprise when he picked up the clothes; he was only puzzled how to get into them. He tried, and struggling with the breeches he threw one hand out to the wall to keep from falling and caught a red cord with a bushy red tassel; whereat there was a ringing that made him spring away from it. A moment later there was a knock at his door.

"Did you ring, suh?" asked a voice. What that meant he did not know, and he made no answer. The door was opened slightly and a woolly head appeared.

"Do you want anything, suh?"

"No."

"Den I reckon hit was anudder bell—Yassuh."

The boy began putting on his own clothes.

Outside Colonel Dale and Barbara had strolled down the big path to the sun-dial, the colonel telling the story of the little Kentucky kinsman—the little girl listening and wide-eyed.

"Is he going to live here with us, papa?"

"Perhaps. You must be very nice to

him. He has lived a rude, rough life, but I can see he is very sensitive."

At the bend of the river there was the flash of dripping oars, and the song of the black oarsmen came across the yellow flood.

"There they come!" cried Barbara. And from his window the little Kentuckian saw the company coming up the path, brave with gay clothes and smiles and gallantries. The colonel walked with a grand lady at the head, behind were the belles and beaux, and bringing up the rear was Barbara, escorted by a youth of his own age, who carried his hat under his arm and bore himself as haughtily as his elders. No sooner did he see them mounting to the porch than there was the sound of a horn in the rear, and looking out of the other window the lad saw a coach and four dash through the gate and swing around the road that encircled the great trees, and up to the rear portico, where there was a joyous clamor of greetings. Where did all those people come from? Were they going to stay there and would he have to be among them? All the men were dressed alike and not one was dressed like him. Panic as-

sailed him, and once more he looked at the clothes on the bed, and then without hesitation walked through the hallway, and stopped on the threshold of the front door. A quaint figure he made there, and for the moment the gay talk and laughter quite ceased. The story of him already had been told, and already was sweeping from cabin to cabin to the farthest edge of the great plantation. Mrs. General Willoughby lifted her lorgnettes to study him curiously, the young ladies turned a battery of searching but friendly rays upon him, the young men regarded him with tolerance and repressed amusement, and Barbara, already his champion, turned her eyes from one to the other of them, but always seeing him. No son of Powhatan could have stood there with more dignity, and young Harry Dale's face broke into a smile of welcome. His father being indoors he went forward with hand outstretched.

"I am your cousin Harry," he said, and taking him by the arm he led him on the round of presentation.

"Mrs. Willoughby, may I present my cousin from Kentucky?"

"This is your cousin, Miss Katherine Dale; another cousin, Miss Mary; and this is your cousin Hugh."

And the young ladies greeted him with frank, eager interest, and the young gentlemen suddenly repressed patronizing smiles and gave him grave greeting, for if ever a rapier flashed from a human head, it flashed from the piercing black eye of that little Kentucky backwoodsman when his cousin Hugh, with a rather whimsical smile, bowed with a politeness that was a trifle too elaborate. Mrs. Willoughby still kept her lorgnettes on him as he stood leaning against a pillar. She noted the smallness of his hands and feet, the lithe, perfect body, the clean cut of his face, and she breathed:

"He is a Dale—and blood *does* tell."

Nobody, not even she, guessed how the lad's heart was thumping with the effort to conceal his embarrassment, but when a tinge of color spread on each side of his set mouth and his eyes began to waver uncertainly, Mrs. Willoughby's intuition was quick and kind.

"Barbara," she asked, "have you shown your cousin your ponies?"

The little girl saw her motive and laughed merrily:

"Why, I haven't had time to show him anything. Come on, cousin."

The boy followed her down the steps in his noiseless moccasins, along a grass path between hedges of ancient box, around an ell, and past the kitchen and toward the stables. In and behind the kitchen negroes of all ages and both sexes were hurrying or lazing around, and each turned to stare wonderingly after the strange woodland figure of the little hunter. Negroes were coming in from the fields with horses and mules, negroes were chopping and carrying wood, there were negroes everywhere, and the lad had never seen one before, but he showed no surprise. At a gate the little girl called imperiously:

"Ephraim, bring out my ponies!"

And in a moment out came a sturdy little slave whose head was all black skin, black wool, and white teeth, leading two creamy-white little horses that shook the lad's composure at last, for he knew ponies as far back as he could remember, but he had never seen the like of them. His hand almost trembled

when he ran it over their sleek coats, and unconsciously he dropped into his Indian speech and did not know it until the girl asked laughingly:

"Why, what are you saying to my ponies?"

And he blushed, for the little girl's artless prattling and friendliness were already beginning to make him quite human.

"That's Injun talk."

"Can you talk Indian—but, of course, you can."

"Better than English," he smiled.

Hugh had followed them.

"Barbara, your mother wants you," he said, and the little girl turned toward the house. The stranger was ill at ease with Hugh and the latter knew it.

"It must be very exciting where you live."

"How?"

"Oh, fighting Indians and shooting deer and turkeys and buffalo. It must be great fun."

"Nobody does it for fun—it's mighty hard work."

"My uncle—your father—used to tell us about his wonderful adventures out there."

"He had no chance to tell me."

"But yours must have been more wonderful than his."

The boy gave the little grunt that was a survival of his Indian life and turned to go back to the house.

"But all this, I suppose, is as strange to you."

"More."

Hugh was polite and apparently sincere in interest, but the lad was vaguely disturbed and he quickened his step. The porch was empty when they turned the corner of the house, but young Harry Dale came running down the steps, his honest face alight, and caught the little Kentuckian by the arm.

"Get ready for supper, Hugh—come on, cousin," he said, and led the stranger to his room and pointed to the clothes on the bed.

"Don't they fit?" he asked smiling.

"I don't know—I don't know how to git into 'em."

Young Harry laughed joyously.

"Of course not. I wouldn't know how to put yours on either. You just wait,"

he cried, and disappeared to return quickly with an armful of clothes.

"Take off your war-dress," he said, "and I'll show you."

With heart warming to such kindness, and helpless against it, the lad obeyed like a child and was dressed like a child.

"Now, I've got to hurry," said Harry. "I'll come back for you. Just look at yourself," he called at the door.

And the stranger did look at the wonderful vision that a great mirror as tall as himself gave back. His eyes began to sting, and he rubbed them with the back of his hand and looked at the hand curiously. It was moist. He had seen tears in a woman's eyes, but he did not know that they could come to a man, and he felt ashamed.

V

The boy stood at a window looking out into the gathering dusk. His eye could catch the last red glow on the yellow river. Above that a purplish light rested on the green expanse stretching westward—stretching on and on through savage wilds to his own wilds beyond the lonely Cumberlands. Outside the window the multitude of flowers was drinking in the dew and drooping restfully to sleep. A multitude of strange birds called and twittered from the trees. The neighing of horses, the lowing of cattle, the piping of roosting turkeys and motherly clutter of roosting hens, the weird songs of negroes, the sounds of busy preparation through the house and from the kitchen—all were sounds of peace and plenty, security and service. And over in his own wilds at that hour they were driving cows and horses into the stockade. They were cooking their rude supper in the open. A man had gone to each of the watch-towers. From the

blackening woods came the curdling cry of a panther and the hooting of owls. Away on over the still westward wilds were the wigwams of squaws, pappooses, braves, the red men—red in skin, in blood, in heart, and red with hate against the whites.

Perhaps they were circling a fire at that moment in a frenzied war-dance—perhaps the hooting at that moment from the woods around the fort was not the hooting of owls at all. There all was hardship—danger; here all was comfort and peace. If they could see him now! See his room, his fire, his bed, his clothes! They had told him to come, and yet he felt now the shame of desertion. He had come, but he would not stay long away. The door opened, he turned, and Harry Dale came eagerly in.

"Mother wants to see you."

The two boys paused in the hall and Harry pointed to a pair of crossed rapiers over the mantelpiece.

"Those were your father's," he said; "he was a wonderful fencer."

The lad shook his head in ignorance, and Harry smiled.

"I'll show you to-morrow."

At a door in the other ell Harry knocked gently, and a voice that was low and sweet but vibrant with imperiousness called:

"Come in!"

"Here he is, mother."

The lad stepped into warmth, subtle fragrance, and many candle lights. The great lady was just rising from a chair in front of her mirror, brocaded, powdered, and starred with jewels. So brilliant a vision almost stunned the little stranger and it took an effort for him to lift his eyes to hers.

"Why, *this* is not the lad you told me of," she said. "Come here! Both of you." They came and the lady scrutinized them comparingly.

"Actually you look alike—and, Harry, you have no advantage, even if you are my own son. I am glad you are here," she said with sudden soberness, and smiling tenderly she put both hands on his shoulders, drew him to her and kissed him, and again he felt in his eyes that curious sting.

"Come, Harry!" With a gallant bow Harry offered his left arm, and gathering the

little Kentuckian with her left, the regal lady swept out. In the reception-room she kept the boy by her side. Every man who approached bowed, and soon the lad was bowing, too. The ladies courtesied, the room was soon filled, and amid the flash of smiles, laughter, and gay banter the lad was much bewildered, but his face showed it not at all. Barbara almost cried out her astonishment and pleasure when she saw what a handsome figure he made in his new clothing, and all her little friends were soon darting surreptitious glances at him, and many whispered questions and pleasing comments were passed around. From under Hugh's feet the ground for the moment was quite taken away, so much to the eye, at least, do clothes make the man. Just then General Willoughby bowed with noble dignity before Mrs. Dale, and the two led the way to the dining-room.

"Harry," she said, "you and Barbara take care of your cousin."

And almost without knowing it the young Kentuckian bowed to Barbara, who courtesied and took his arm. But for his own dignity and hers, she would have liked to squeal

her delight. The table flashed with silver and crystal on snowy-white damask and was brilliant with colored candles. The little woodsman saw the men draw back chairs for the ladies, and he drew back Barbara's before Hugh, on the other side of her, could forestall him. On his left was Harry, and Harry he watched keenly—but no more keenly than Hugh watched him. Every now and then he would catch a pair of interested eyes looking furtively at him, and he knew his story was going the round of the table among those who were not guests in the house. The boy had never seen so many and so mysterious-looking things to eat and drink. One glass of wine he took, and the quick dizziness that assailed him frightened him, and he did not touch it again. Beyond Barbara, Hugh leaned forward and lifted his glass to him. He shook his head and Hugh flushed.

"Our Kentucky cousin is not very polite—he is something of a barbarian—naturally."

"He doesn't understand," said Barbara quickly, who had noted the incident, and she turned to her cousin.

"Papa says you *are* going to live with us

and you are going to study with Harry under Mr. Brockton."

"Our tutor," explained Harry; "there he is across there. He is an Englishman."

"Tutor?" questioned the boy.

"School-teacher," laughed Harry.

"Oh!"

"Haven't you any school-teachers at home?"

"No, I learned to read and write a little from Dave and Lyddy."

And then he had to tell who they were, and he went on to tell them about Mother Sanders and Honor and Bud and Jack and Polly Conrad and Lydia and Dave, and all the frontier folk, and the life they led, and the Indian fights which thrilled Barbara and Harry, and forced even Hugh to listen—though once he laughed incredulously, and in a way that of a sudden shut the boy's lips tight and made Barbara color and Harry look grave. Hugh then turned to his wine and began soon to look more flushed and sulky. Shortly after the ladies left, Hugh followed them, and Harry and the Kentuckian moved toward the head of the table

where the men had gathered around Colonel Dale.

"Yes," said General Willoughby, "it looks as though it might come."

"With due deference to Mr. Brockton," said Colonel Dale, "it looks as though his country would soon force us to some action."

They were talking about impending war. Far away as his wilds were, the boy had heard some talk of war in them, and he listened greedily to the quick fire of question and argument directed to the Englishman, who held his own with such sturdiness that Colonel Dale, fearing the heat might become too great, laughed and skilfully shifted the theme. Through hall and doorways came now merry sounds of fiddle and banjo.

"Come on, cousin," said Harry; "can you dance?"

"If your dances are as different as everything else, I reckon not, but I can try."

Near a doorway between parlor and hall sat the fiddlers three. Gallant bows and dainty courtesyings and nimble feet were tripping measures quite new to the backwoodsman. Barbara nodded, smiled, and

after the dance ran up to ask him to take part, but he shook his head. Hugh had looked at him as from a superior height, and the boy noticed him frowning while Barbara was challenging him to dance. The next dance was even more of a mystery, for the dancers glided by in couples, Mr. Byron's diatribe not having prevented the importation of the waltz to the new world, but the next cleared his face and set his feet to keeping time, for the square dance had, of course, reached the wilds.

"I know that," he said to Harry, who told Barbara, and the little girl went up to him again, and this time, flushing, he took place with her on the floor. Hugh came up.

"Cousin Barbara, this is our dance, I believe," he said a little thickly.

The girl took him aside and Hugh went surlily away. Harry saw the incident and he looked after Hugh, frowning. The backwoodsman conducted himself very well. He was lithe and graceful and at first very dignified, but as he grew in confidence he began to execute steps that were new to that polite land and rather boisterous, but Barbara looked pleased and all onlookers seemed

greatly amused—all except Hugh. And when the old fiddler sang out sonorously:

"Genelmen to right—cheat an' swing!" the boy cheated outrageously, cheated all but his little partner, to whom each time he turned with open loyalty, and Hugh was openly sneering now and genuinely angry.

"You shall have the last dance," whispered Barbara, "the Virginia reel."

"I know that dance," said the boy.

And when that dance came and the dancers were drawn in two lines, the boy who was third from the end heard Harry's low voice behind him:

"He is my cousin and my guest and you will answer to me."

The lad wheeled, saw Harry with Hugh, left his place, and went to them. He spoke to Harry, but he looked at Hugh with a sword-flash in each black eye:

"I don't want nobody to take up for me."

Again he wheeled and was in his place, but Barbara saw and looked troubled, and so did Colonel Dale. He went over to the two boys and put his arm around Hugh's shoulder.

"I don't want nobody to take up for me"

"Tut, tut, my boys," he said, with pleasant firmness, and led Hugh away, and when General Willoughby would have followed, the colonel nodded him back with a smile, and Hugh was seen no more that night. The guests left with gayety, smiles, and laughter, and every one gave the stranger a kindly good-by. Again Harry went with him to his room and the lad stopped again under the crossed swords.

"You fight with 'em?"

"Yes, and with pistols."

"I've never had a pistol. I want to learn how to use *them*."

Harry looked at him searchingly, but the boy's face gave hint of no more purpose than when he first asked the same question.

"All right," said Harry.

The lad blew out his candle, but he went to his window instead of his bed. The moonlight was brilliant among the trees and on the sleeping flowers and the slow run of the broad river, and it was very still out there and very lovely, but he had no wish to be out there. With wind and storm and sun, moon and stars, he had lived face to face all his life, but

here they were not the same. Trees, flowers, house, people had reared some wall between him and them, and they seemed now to be very far away. Everybody had been kind to him—all but Hugh. Veiled hostility he had never known before and he could not understand. Everybody had surely been kind, and yet—he turned to his bed, and all night his brain was flashing to and fro between the reel of vivid pictures etched on it in a day and the grim background that had hitherto been his life beyond the hills.

VI

From pioneer habit he awoke before dawn, and for a moment the softness where he lay puzzled him. There was no sound of anybody stirring and he thought he must have waked up in the middle of the night, but he could smell the dawn and he started to spring up. But there was nothing to be done, nothing that he could do. He felt hot and stuffy, though Harry had put up his windows, and he could not lie there wide awake. He could not go out in the heavy dew in the gay clothes and fragile shoes he had taken off, so he slid into his own buckskin clothes and moccasins and out the still open front door and down the path toward the river. Instinctively he had picked up his rifle, bullet-pouch, and powder-horn. Up the river to the right he could faintly see dark woods, and he made toward and plunged into them with his eyes on the ground for signs of game, but he saw tracks only of coon and skunk and fox, and he grunted his disgust and loped ahead for

half an hour farther into the heart of the woods. An hour later he loped back on his own tracks. The cabins were awake now, and every pickaninny who saw him showed the whites of his eyes in terror and fled back into his house. He came noiselessly behind a negro woman at the kitchen-door and threw three squirrels on the steps before her. She turned, saw him, and gave a shriek, but recovered herself and picked them up. Her amazement grew as she looked them over, for there was no sign of a bullet-wound, and she went in to tell how the Injun boy must naturally just "charm 'em right out o' de trees."

At the front door Harry hailed him and Barbara came running out.

"I forgot to get you another suit of clothes last night," he said, "and we were scared this morning. We thought you had left us, and Barbara there nearly cried." Barbara blushed now and did not deny.

"Come to breakfast!" she cried.

"Did you find anything to shoot?" Harry asked.

"Nothin' but some squirrels," said the lad.

Colonel Dale soon came in.

"You've got the servants mystified," he said laughingly. "They think you're a witch. How *did* you kill those squirrels?"

"I couldn't see their heads—so I barked 'em."

"Barked?"

"I shot between the bark and the limb right under the squirrel, an' the shock kills 'em. Uncle Dan'l Boone showed me how to do that."

"Daniel Boone!" breathed Harry. "Do you know Daniel Boone?"

"Shucks, Dave can beat him shootin'."

And then Hugh came in, pale of face and looking rather ashamed. He went straight to the Kentuckian.

"I was rude to you last night and I owe you an apology."

He thrust out his hand and awkwardly the boy rose and took it.

"And you'll forgive me, too, Barbara?"

"Of course I will," she said happily, but holding up one finger of warning—should he ever do it again. The rest of the guests trooped in now, and some were going out on

horseback, some for a sail, and some visiting up the river in a barge, and all were paired off, even Harry.

"I'm going to drive Cousin Erskine over the place with my ponies," said Barbara, "and——"

"I'm going back to bed," interrupted Hugh, "or read a little Latin and Greek with Mr. Brockton." There was impudence as well as humor in this, for the tutor had given up Hugh in despair long ago.

Barbara shook her head.

"You are going with us," she said.

"I want Hugh to ride with me," said Colonel Dale, "and give Firefly a little exercise. Nobody else can ride him."

The Kentucky boy turned a challenging eye, as did every young man at the table, and Hugh felt very comfortable. While every one was getting ready, Harry brought out two foils and two masks on the porch a little later.

"We fight with those," he said, pointing to the crossed rapiers on the wall, "but we practise with these. Hugh, there, is the champion fencer," he said, "and he'll show you."

Harry helped the Kentucky boy to mask and they crossed foils—Hugh giving instructions all the time and nodding approval.

"You'll learn—you'll learn fast," he said. And over his shoulder to Harry:

"Why, his wrist is as strong as mine now, and he's got an eye like a weasel."

With a twist he wrenched the foil from his antagonist's hand and clattered it on the steps. The Kentuckian was bewildered and his face flushed. He ran for the weapon.

"You can't do that again."

"I don't believe I can," laughed Hugh.

"Will you learn me some more?" asked the boy eagerly.

"I surely will."

A little later Barbara and her cousin were trotting smartly along a sandy road through the fields with the colonel and Hugh loping in front of them. Firefly was a black mettlesome gelding. He had reared and plunged when Hugh mounted, and even now he was champing his bit and leaping playfully at times, but the lad sat him with an unconcern of his capers that held the Kentucky boy's eyes.

"Gosh," he said, "but Hugh can ride! I wonder if he could stay on him bareback."

"I suppose so," Barbara said; "Hugh can do anything."

The summer fields of corn and grain waved away on each side under the wind, innumerable negroes were at work and song on either side, great barns and whitewashed cabins dotted the rich landscape which beyond the plantation broke against woods of sombre pines. For an hour they drove, the boy's bewildered eye missing few details and understanding few, so foreign to him were all the changes wrought by the hand, and he could hardly have believed that this country was once as wild as his own—that this was to be impoverished and his own become even a richer land. Many questions the little girl asked—and some of his answers made her shudder.

"Papa said last night that several of our kinsfolk spoke of going to your country in a party, and Harry and Hugh are crazy to go with them. Papa said people would be swarming over the Cumberland Mountains before long."

"I wish you'd come along."

Barbara laughed.

"I wouldn't like to lose my hair."

"I'll watch out for that," said the boy with such confident gravity that Barbara turned to look at him.

"I believe you would," she murmured. And presently:

"What did the Indians call you?"

"White Arrow."

"White Arrow. That's lovely. Why?"

"I could outrun all the other boys."

"Then you'll have to run to-morrow when we go to the fair at Williamsburg."

"The fair?"

Barbara explained.

For an hour or more they had driven and there was no end to the fields of tobacco and grain.

"Are we still on your land?"

Barbara laughed. "Yes, we can't drive around the plantation and get back for dinner. I think we'd better turn now."

"Plan-ta-tion," said the lad. "What's that?"

Barbara waved her whip.

"Why, all this—the land—the farm."

"Oh!"

"It's called Red Oaks—from those big trees back of the house."

"Oh. I know oaks—all of 'em."

She wheeled the ponies and with fresh zest they scampered for home. She even let them run for a while, laughing and chatting meanwhile, though the light wagon swayed from side to side perilously as the boy thought, and when, in his ignorance of the discourtesy involved, he was on the point of reaching for the reins, she spoke to them and pulled them gently into a swift trot. Everybody had gathered for the noonday dinner when they swung around the great trees and up to the back porch. The clamor of the great bell gave its summons and the guests began straggling in by couples from the garden. Just as they were starting in the Kentucky boy gave a cry and darted down the path. A towering figure in coonskin cap and hunter's garb was halted at the sun-dial and looking toward them.

"Now, I wonder who *that* is," said Colonel Dale. "Jupiter, but that boy can run!"

They saw the tall stranger stare wonderingly at the boy and throw back his head and laugh. Then the two came on together. The boy was still flushed but the hunter's face was grave.

"This is Dave," said the boy simply.

"Dave Yandell," added the stranger, smiling and taking off his cap. "I've been at Williamsburg to register some lands and I thought I'd come and see how this young man is getting along."

Colonel Dale went quickly to meet him with outstretched hand.

"I'm glad you did," he said heartily. "Erskine has already told us about you. You are just in time for dinner."

"That's mighty kind," said Dave. And the ladies, after he was presented, still looked at him with much curiosity and great interest. Truly, strange visitors were coming to Red Oaks these days.

That night the subject of Hugh and Harry going back home with the two Kentuckians was broached to Colonel Dale, and to the wondering delight of the two boys both fathers seemed to consider it favorably. Mr. Brock-

ton was going to England for a visit, the summer was coming on, and both fathers thought it would be a great benefit to their sons. Even Mrs. Dale, on whom the hunter had made a most agreeable impression, smiled and said she would already be willing to trust her son with their new guest anywhere.

"I shall take good care of him, madam," said Dave with a bow.

Colonel Dale, too, was greatly taken with the stranger, and he asked many questions of the new land beyond the mountains. There was dancing again that night, and the hunter, towering a head above them all, looked on with smiling interest. He even took part in a square dance with Miss Jane Willoughby, handling his great bulk with astonishing grace and lightness of foot. Then the elder gentlemen went into the drawing-room to their port and pipes, and the boy Erskine slipped after them and listened enthralled to the talk of the coming war.

Colonel Dale had been in Hanover ten years before, when one Patrick Henry voiced the first intimation of independence in Virginia; Henry, a country storekeeper—bank-

rupt; farmer—bankrupt; storekeeper again, and bankrupt again; an idler, hunter, fisher, and story-teller—even a "barkeeper," as Mr. Jefferson once dubbed him, because Henry had once helped his father-in-law to keep tavern. That far back Colonel Dale had heard Henry denounce the clergy, stigmatize the king as a tyrant who had forfeited all claim to obedience, and had seen the orator caught up on the shoulders of the crowd and amidst shouts of applause borne around the court-house green. He had seen the same Henry ride into Richmond two years later on a lean horse: with papers in his saddle-pockets, his expression grim, his tall figure stooping, a peculiar twinkle in his small blue eyes, his brown wig without powder, his coat peach-blossom in color, his knee-breeches of leather, and his stockings of yarn. The speaker of the Burgesses was on a dais under a red canopy supported by gilded rods, and the clerk sat beneath with a mace on the table before him, but Henry cried for liberty or death, and the shouts of treason failed then and there to save Virginia for the king. The lad's brain whirled. What did all this

mean? Who was this king and what had he done? He had known but the one from whom he had run away. And this talk of taxes and Stamp Acts; and where was that strange land, New England, whose people had made tea of the salt water in Boston harbor? Until a few days before he had never known what tea was, and he didn't like it. When he got Dave alone he would learn and learn and learn—everything. And then the young people came quietly in and sat down quietly, and Colonel Dale, divining what they wanted, got Dave started on stories of the wild wilderness that was his home—the first chapter in the Iliad of Kentucky—the land of dark forests and cane thickets that separated Catawbas, Creeks, and Cherokees on the south from Delawares, Wyandottes, and Shawnees on the north, who fought one another, and all of whom the whites must fight. How Boone came and stayed two years in the wilderness alone, and when found by his brother was lying on his back in the woods lustily singing hymns. How hunters and surveyors followed; how the first fort was built, and the first women stood on the banks of the Kentucky River. He told of the perils

and hardships of the first journeys thither—fights with wild beasts and wild men, chases, hand-to-hand combats, escapes, and massacres—and only the breathing of his listeners could be heard, save the sound of his own voice. And he came finally to the story of the attack on the fort, the raising of a small hand above the cane, palm outward, and the swift dash of a slender brown body into the fort, and then, seeing the boy's face turn scarlet, he did not tell how that same lad had slipped back into the woods even while the fight was going on, and slipped back with the bloody scalp of his enemy, but ended with the timely coming of the Virginians, led by the lad's father, who got his death-wound at the very gate. The tense breathing of his listeners culminated now in one general deep breath.

Colonel Dale rose and turned to General Willoughby.

"And *that's* where he wants to take our boys."

"Oh, it's much safer now," said the hunter. "We have had no trouble for some time, and there's no danger inside the fort."

"I can imagine you keeping those boys

inside the fort when there's so much going on outside. Still—" Colonel Dale stopped and the two boys took heart again. The ladies rose to go to bed, and Mrs. Dale was shaking her head very doubtfully, but she smiled up at the tall hunter when she bade him good night.

"I shall not take back what I said."

"Thank you, madam," said Dave, and he bent his lips to her absurdly little white hand.

Colonel Dale escorted the boy and Dave to their room. Mr. Yandell must go with them to the fair at Williamsburg next morning, and Mr. Yandell would go gladly. They would spend the night there and go to the Governor's Ball. The next day there was a county fair, and perhaps Mr. Henry would speak again. Then Mr. Yandell must come back with them to Red Oaks and pay them a visit—no, the colonel would accept no excuse whatever.

The boy plied Dave with questions about the people in the wilderness and passed to sleep. Dave lay awake a long time thinking that war was sure to come. They were Americans now, said Colonel Dale—not Virginians,

just as nearly a century later the same people were to say:

"We are not Americans now—we are Virginians."

VII

It was a merry cavalcade that swung around the great oaks that spring morning in 1774. Two coaches with outriders and postilions led the way with their precious freight—the elder ladies in the first coach, and the second blossoming with flower-like faces and starred with dancing eyes. Booted and spurred, the gentlemen rode behind, and after them rolled the baggage-wagons, drawn by mules in jingling harness. Harry on a chestnut sorrel and the young Kentuckian on a high-stepping gray followed the second coach —Hugh on Firefly champed the length of the column. Colonel Dale and Dave brought up the rear. The road was of sand and there was little sound of hoof or wheel—only the hum of voices, occasional sallies when a neighbor joined them, and laughter from the second coach as happy and care-free as the singing of birds from trees by the roadside.

The capital had been moved from Jamestown to the spot where Bacon had taken the

oath against England—then called Middle-Plantation, and now Williamsburg. The cavalcade wheeled into Gloucester Street, and Colonel Dale pointed out to Dave the old capitol at one end and William and Mary College at the other. Mr. Henry had thundered in the old capitol, the Burgesses had their council-chamber there, and in the hall there would be a ball that night. Near the street was a great building which the colonel pointed out as the governor's palace, surrounded by pleasure-grounds of full three hundred acres and planted thick with linden-trees. My Lord Dunmore lived there. Back at the plantation Dave had read in an old copy of *The Virginia Gazette*, amid advertisements of shopkeepers, the arrival and departure of ships, and poetical bits that sang of Myrtilla, Florella, and other colonial belles, how the town had made an illumination in honor of the recent arrival of the elegant Lady Dunmore and her three fine, sprightly daughters, from whose every look flashed goodness of heart. For them the gentlemen of the Burgesses were to give a ball the next night. At this season the planters came with their fam-

ilies to the capitol, and the street was as brilliant as a fancy-dress parade would be to us now. It was filled with coaches and fours. Maidens moved daintily along in silk and lace, high-heeled shoes and clocked stockings. Youths passed on spirited horses, college students in academic dress swaggered through the throng, and from his serene excellency's coach, drawn by six milk-white horses, my lord bowed grimly to the grave lifting of hats on either side of the street.

The cavalcade halted before a building with a leaden bust of Sir Walter Raleigh over the main doorway, the old Raleigh Tavern, in the Apollo Room of which Mr. Jefferson had rapturously danced with his Belinda, and which was to become the Faneuil Hall of Virginia. Both coaches were quickly surrounded by bowing gentlemen, young gallants, and frolicsome students. Dave, the young Kentuckian, and Harry would be put up at the tavern, and, for his own reasons, Hugh elected to stay with them. With an *au revoir* of white hands from the coaches, the rest went on to the house of relatives and friends.

Inside the tavern Hugh was soon surrounded by fellow students and boon companions. He pressed Dave and the boy to drink with them, but Dave laughingly declined and took the lad up to their room. Below they could hear Hugh's merriment going on, and when he came up-stairs a while later his face was flushed, he was in great spirits, and was full of enthusiasm over a horse-race and cock-fight that he had arranged for the afternoon. With him came a youth of his own age with daredevil eyes and a suave manner, one Dane Grey, to whom Harry gave scant greeting. One patronizing look from the stranger toward the Kentucky boy and within the latter a fire of antagonism was instantly kindled. With a word after the two went out, Harry snorted his explanation:

"Tory!"

In the early afternoon coach and horsemen moved out to an "old field." Hugh was missing from the Dale party, and General Willoughby frowned when he noted his son's absence. When they arrived a most extraordinary concert of sounds was filling the air. On a platform stood twenty fiddlers in contest

for a fiddle—each sawing away for dear life and each playing a different tune—a custom that still survives in our own hills. After this a "quire of ballads" was sung for. Then a crowd of boys gathered to run one hundred and twelve yards for a hat worth twelve shillings, and Dave nudged his young friend. A moment later Harry cried to Barbara:

"Look there!"

There was their young Indian lining up with the runners, his face calm, but an eager light in his eyes. At the word he started off almost leisurely, until the whole crowd was nearly ten yards ahead of him, and then a yell of astonishment rose from the crowd. The boy was skimming the grounds on wings. Past one after another he flew, and laughing and hardly out of breath he bounded over the finish, with the first of the rest laboring with bursting lungs ten yards behind. Hugh and Dane Grey had appeared arm in arm and were moving through the crowd with great gayety and some boisterousness, and when the boy appeared with his hat Grey shouted:

"Good for the little savage!" Erskine

wheeled furiously but Dave caught him by the arm and led him back to Harry and Barbara, who looked so pleased that the lad's ill-humor passed at once.

"Whut you reckon I c'n do with this hat?"

"Put it on!" smiled Barbara; but it was so ludicrous surmounting his hunter's garb that she couldn't help laughing aloud. Harry looked uneasy, but it was evident that the girl was the one person who could laugh at the sensitive little woodsman with no offense.

"I reckon you're right," he said, and gravely he handed it to Harry and gravely Harry accepted it. Hugh and his friend had not approached them, for Hugh had seen the frown on his father's face, but Erskine saw Grey look long at Barbara, turn to question Hugh, and again he began to burn within.

The wrestlers had now stepped forth to battle for a pair of silver buckles, and the boy in turn nudged Dave, but unavailingly. The wrestling was good and Dave watched it with keen interest. One huge bull-necked fellow was easily the winner, but when the silver buckles were in his hand, he boastfully challenged anybody in the crowd. Dave

shouldered through the crowd and faced the victor.

"I'll try you once," he said, and a shout of approval rose.

The Dale party crowded close and my lord's coach appeared on the outskirts and stopped.

"Backholts or catch-as-catch-can?" asked the victor sneeringly.

"As you please," said Dave.

The bully rushed. Dave caught him around the neck with his left arm, his right swinging low, the bully was lifted from the ground, crushed against Dave's breast, the wind went out of him with a grunt, and Dave with a smile began swinging him to and fro as though he were putting a child to sleep. The spectators yelled their laughter and the bully roared like a bull. Then Dave reached around with his left hand, caught the bully's left wrist, pulled loose his hold, and with a leftward twist of his own body tossed his antagonist some several feet away. The bully turned once in the air and lighted resoundingly on his back. He got up dazed and sullen, but breaking into a good-natured laugh, shook his head and held forth the buckles to Dave.

"You won 'em," Dave said. "They're yours. I wasn't wrastling for them. You challenged. We'll shake hands."

Then my Lord Dunmore sent for Dave and asked him where he was from.

"And do you know the Indian country on this side of the Cumberland?" asked his lordship.

"Very well."

His lordship smiled thoughtfully.

"I may have need of you."

Dave bowed:

"I am an American, my lord."

His lordship flamed, but he controlled himself.

"You are at least an open enemy," he said, and gave orders to move on.

The horse-race was now on, and meanwhile a pair of silk stockings, of one pistol's value, was yet to be conferred. Colonel Dale had given Hugh permission to ride Firefly in the race, but when he saw the lad's condition he peremptorily refused.

"And nobody else can ride him," he said, with much disappointment.

"Let me try!" cried Erskine.

"You!" Colonel Dale started to laugh, but he caught Dave's eye.

"Surely," said Dave. The colonel hesitated.

"Very well—I will."

At once the three went to the horse, and the negro groom rolled his eyes when he learned what his purpose was.

"Dis hoss'll kill dat boy," he muttered, but the horse had already submitted his haughty head to the lad's hand and was standing quietly. Even Colonel Dale showed amazement and concern when the boy insisted that the saddle be taken off, as he wanted to ride bareback, and again Dave overcame his scruples with a word of full confidence. The boy had been riding pony-races bareback, he explained, among the Indians, as long as he had been able to sit a horse. The astonishment of the crowd when they saw Colonel Dale's favorite horse enter the course with a young Indian apparently on him bareback will have to be imagined, but when they recognized the rider as the lad who had won the race, the betting through psychological perversity was stronger than

ever on Firefly. Hugh even took an additional bet with his friend Grey, who was quite openly scornful.

"You bet on the horse now," he said.

"On both," said Hugh.

It was a pretty and a close race between Firefly and a white-starred bay mare, and they came down the course neck and neck like two whirlwinds. A war-whoop so Indian-like and curdling that it startled every old frontiersman who heard it came suddenly from one of the riders. Then Firefly stretched ahead inch by inch, and another triumphant savage yell heralded victory as the black horse swept over the line a length ahead. Dane Grey swore quite fearfully, for it was a bet that he could ill afford to lose. He was talking with Barbara when the boy came back to the Dales, and something he was saying made the girl color resentfully, and the lad heard her say sharply:

"He is my cousin," and she turned away from the young gallant and gave the youthful winner a glad smile. Just then a group of four men stopped near, looked closely at the little girl, and held a short consultation. One

of them came forward with a pair of silk stockings in his hand.

"These are for the loveliest maiden present here. The committee chooses you."

And later he reported to his fellow members:

"It was like a red rose courtesying and breathing thanks."

Again Hugh and Dane Grey were missing when the party started back to the town—they were gone to bet on "Bacon's Thunderbolts" in a cock-fight. That night they still were missing when the party went to see the Virginia Comedians in a play by one Mr. Congreve—they were gaming that night—and next morning when the Kentucky lad rose, he and Dave through his window saw the two young roisterers approaching the porch of the hotel—much dishevelled and all but staggering with drink.

"I don't like that young man," said Dave, "and he has a bad influence on Hugh."

That morning news came from New England that set the town a-quiver. England's answer to the Boston tea-party had been the closing of Boston harbor. In the House of

Burgesses, the news was met with a burst of indignation. The 1st of June was straightway set apart as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer that God would avert the calamity threatening the civil rights of America. In the middle of the afternoon my lord's coach and six white horses swung from his great yard and made for the capitol—my lord sitting erect and haughty, his lips set with the resolution to crush the spirit of the rebellion. It must have been a notable scene, for Nicholas, Bland, Lee, Harrison, Pendleton, Henry, and Jefferson, and perhaps Washington, were there. And my lord was far from popular. He had hitherto girded himself with all the trappings of etiquette, had a court herald prescribe rules for the guidance of Virginians in approaching his excellency, had entertained little and, unlike his predecessors, made no effort to establish cordial relations with the people of the capitol. The Burgesses were to give a great ball in his honor that very night, and now he was come to dissolve them. And dissolve them he did. They bowed gravely and with no protest. Shaking with anger my lord stalked

to his coach and six while they repaired to the Apollo Room to prohibit the use of tea and propose a general congress of the colonies. And that ball came to pass. Haughty hosts received their haughty guest with the finest and gravest courtesy, bent low over my lady's hand, danced with her daughters, and wrung from my lord's reluctant lips the one grudging word of comment:

"Gentlemen!"

And the ladies of his family bobbed their heads sadly in confirmation, for the steel-like barrier between them was so palpable that it could have been touched that night, it seemed, by the hand.

The two backwoodsmen had been dazzled by the brilliance of it all, for the boy had stood with Barbara, who had been allowed to look on for a while. Again my lord had summoned Dave to him and asked many questions about the wilderness beyond the Cumberland, and he even had the boy to come up and shake hands, and asked him where he had learned to ride so well. He lifted his eyebrows when Dave answered for him and murmured with surprise and interest:

"So—so!"

Before Barbara was sent home Hugh and Dane Grey, dressed with great care, came in, with an exaggeration of dignity and politeness that fooled few others than themselves. Hugh, catching Barbara's sad and reproachful glance, did not dare go near her, but Dane made straight for her side when he entered the room —and bowed with great gallantry. To the boy he paid no attention whatever, and the latter, fired with indignation and hate, turned hastily away. But in a corner unseen he could not withhold watching the two closely, and he felt vaguely that he was watching a frightened bird and a snake. The little girl's self-composure seemed quite to vanish, her face flushed, her eyes were downcast, and her whole attitude had a mature embarrassment that was far beyond her years. The lad wondered and was deeply disturbed. The half overlooking and wholly contemptuous glance that Grey had shot over his head had stung him like a knife-cut, so like an actual knife indeed that without knowing it his right hand was then fumbling at his belt. Dave too was noticing and so was Barbara's mother and her

father, who knew very well that this smooth, suave, bold, young daredevil was deliberately leading Hugh into all the mischief he could find. Nor did he leave the girl's side until she was taken home. Erskine, too, left then and went back to the tavern and up to his room. Then with his knife in his belt he went down again and waited on the porch. Already guests were coming back from the party and it was not long before he saw Hugh and Dane Grey half-stumbling up the steps. Erskine rose. Grey confronted the lad dully for a moment and then straightened.

"Here's anuzzer one wants to fight," he said thickly. "My young friend, I will oblige you anywhere with anything, at any time—except to-night. You must regard zhat as great honor, for I am not accustomed to fight with savages."

And he waved the boy away with such an insolent gesture that the lad, knowing no other desire with an enemy than to kill in any way possible, snatched his knife from his belt. He heard a cry of surprise and horror from Hugh and a huge hand caught his upraised wrist.

"Put it back!" said Dave sternly.

The dazed boy obeyed and Dave led him up-stairs.

VIII

Dave talked to the lad about the enormity of his offense, but to Dave he was inclined to defend himself and his action. Next morning, however, when the party started back to Red Oaks, Erskine felt a difference in the atmosphere that made him uneasy. Barbara alone seemed unchanged, and he was quick to guess that she had not been told of the incident. Hugh was distinctly distant and surly for another reason as well. He had wanted to ask young Grey to become one of their party and his father had decisively forbidden him—for another reason too than his influence over Hugh: Grey and his family were Tories and in high favor with Lord Dunmore.

As yet Dave had made no explanation or excuse for his young friend, but he soon made up his mind that it would be wise to offer the best extenuation as soon as possible; which was simply that the lad knew no better, had not yet had the chance to learn, and on the rage of impulse had acted just as he would

have done among the Indians, whose code alone he knew.

The matter came to a head shortly after their arrival at Red Oaks when Colonel Dale, Harry, Hugh, and Dave were on the front porch. The boy was standing behind the box-hedge near the steps and Barbara had just appeared in the doorway.

"Well, what was the trouble?" Colonel Dale had just asked.

"He tried to stab Grey unarmed and without warning," said Hugh shortly.

At the moment, the boy caught sight of Barbara. Her eyes, filled with scorn, met his in one long, sad, withering look, and she turned noiselessly back into the house. Noiselessly too he melted into the garden, slipped down to the river-bank, and dropped to the ground. He knew at last what he had done. Nothing was said to him when he came back to the house and that night he scarcely opened his lips. In silence he went to bed and next morning he was gone.

The mystery was explained when Barbara told how the boy too must have overheard Hugh.

"He's hurt," said Dave, "and he's gone home."

"On foot?" asked Colonel Dale incredulously.

"He can trot all day and make almost as good time as a horse."

"Why, he'll starve."

Dave laughed:

"He could get there on roots and herbs and wild honey, but he'll have fresh meat every day. Still, I'll have to try to overtake him. I must go, anyhow."

And he asked for his horse and went to get ready for the journey. Ten minutes later Hugh and Harry rushed joyously to his room.

"We're going with you!" they cried, and Dave was greatly pleased. An hour later all were ready, and at the last moment Firefly was led in, saddled and bridled, and with a leading halter around his neck.

"Harry," said Colonel Dale, "carry your cousin my apologies and give him Firefly on condition that he ride him back some day. Tell him this home is his"—the speaker halted, but went on gravely and firmly—"whenever he pleases."

"And give him my love," said Barbara, holding back her tears.

At the river-gate they turned to wave a last good-by and disappeared in the woods. At that hour the boy far over in the wilderness ahead of them had cooked a squirrel that he had shot for his breakfast and was gnawing it to the bones. Soon he rose and at a trot sped on toward his home beyond the Cumberland. And with him, etched with acid on the steel of his brain, sped two images —Barbara's face as he last saw it and the face of young Dane Grey.

The boy's tracks were easily to be seen in the sandy road, and from them Dave judged that he must have left long before daylight. And he was travelling rapidly. They too went as fast as they could, but Firefly led badly and delayed them a good deal. Nobody whom they questioned had laid eyes on the boy, and apparently he had been slipping into the bushes to avoid being seen. At sunset Dave knew that they were not far behind him, but when darkness hid the lad's tracks Dave stopped for the night. Again Erskine had got the start by going on before day, and

it was the middle of the forenoon before Dave, missing the tracks for a hundred yards, halted and turned back to where a little stream crossed the road and dismounted leading his horse and scrutinizing the ground.

"Ah," he said, "just what I expected. He turned off here to make a bee-line for the fort. He's not far away now." An hour later he dismounted again and smiled: "We're pretty close now."

Meanwhile Harry and Hugh were getting little lessons in woodcraft. Dave pointed out where the lad had broken a twig climbing over a log, where the loose covering of another log had been detached when he leaped to it, and where he had entered the creek, the toe of one moccasin pointing down-stream.

Then Dave laughed aloud:

"He's seen us tracking him and he's doubled on us and is tracking us. I expect he's looking at us from somewhere around here." And he hallooed at the top of his voice, which rang down the forest aisles. A war-whoop answered almost in their ears that made the blood leap in both the boys. Even Dave wheeled with cocked rifle, and the lad stepped

from behind a bush scarcely ten feet behind them.

"Well, by gum," shouted Dave, "fooled us, after all."

A faint grin of triumph was on the lad's lips, but in his eyes was a waiting inquiry directed at Harry and Hugh. They sprang forward, both of them with their hands outstretched:

"We're sorry!"

A few minutes later Hugh was transferring his saddle from Firefly to his own horse, which had gone a trifle lame. On Firefly, Harry buckled the boy's saddle and motioned for him to climb up. The bewildered lad turned to Dave, who laughed:

"It's all right."

"He's your horse, cousin," said Harry. "My father sent him to you and says his home is yours whenever you please. And Barbara sent her love."

At almost the same hour in the great house on the James the old negress was carrying from the boy's room to Colonel Dale in the library a kingly deed that the lad had left behind him. It was a rude scrawl on a sheet

of paper, signed by the boy's Indian name and his totem mark—a buffalo pierced by an arrow.

"It make me laugh. I have no use. I give hole dam plantashun Barbara."

Thus read the scrawl!

IX

Led by Dave, sometimes by the boy, the four followed the course of rivers, upward, always except when they descended some mountain which they had to cross, and then it was soon upward again. The two Virginia lads found themselves, much to their chagrin, as helpless as children, but they were apt pupils and soon learned to make a fire with flint and even with dry sticks of wood. On the second day Harry brought down a buck, and the swiftness and skill with which Dave and the Kentucky boy skinned and cleaned it greatly astonished the two young gentlemen from the James. There Erskine had been helpless, here these two were, and they were as modest over the transposition as was the Kentucky lad in the environment he had just left. Once they saw a herd of buffalo and they tied their horses and slipped toward them. In his excitement Harry fired too soon and the frightened herd thundered toward them.

"Climb a tree!" shouted Erskine dropping his rifle and skinning up a young hickory. Like squirrels they obeyed and from their perches they saw Dave in an open space ahead of them dart for a tree too late.

The buffalo were making straight for them through no purpose but to get away, and to their horror they saw the big hunter squeezing his huge body sidewise against a small tree and the herd dashing under them and past him. They could not see him for the shaggy bodies rushing by, but when they passed, there was Dave unhurt, though the tree on both sides of him had been skinned of its bark by their horns.

"Don't do that again," said Dave, and then seeing the crestfallen terror on Harry's face, he smiled and patted the boy on the shoulder:

"You won't again. You didn't know. You will next time."

Three days later they reached the broad, beautiful Holston River, passing over the pine-crested, white-rocked summit of Clinch Mountain, and came to the last outlying fort of the western frontier. Next day they started on the long, long wilderness trail

toward the Cumberland range. In the lowland they found much holly and laurel and rhododendron. Over Wallen's Ridge they followed a buffalo trail to a river that had been called Beargrass because it was fringed with spikes of white umbelliferous flowers four feet high that were laden with honey and beloved by Bruin of the sweet tooth. The land was level down the valley. On the third day therefrom the gray wall of the Cumberland that ran with frowning inaccessibility on their right gathered its flanks into steep gray cliffs and dipped suddenly into Cumberland Gap. Up this they climbed. On the summit they went into camp, and next morning Dave swept a long arm toward the wild expanse to the west.

"Four more days," he cried, "and we'll be there!"

The two boys looked with awe on the limitless stretch of wooded wilds. It was still Virginia, to be sure, but they felt that once they started down they would be leaving their own beloved State for a strange land of unknown beasts and red men who peopled that "dark and bloody ground."

Before sunrise next morning they were dropping down the steep and rocky trail. Before noon they reached the beautiful Cumberland River, and Dave told them that, below, it ran over a great rocky cliff, tumbling into foam and spray over mighty boulders around which the Indians had to carry their bark canoes. As they rode along the bank of the stream the hills got lower and were densely thicketed with laurel and rhododendron, and impenetrable masses of cane-brake filled every little valley curve. That night they slept amid the rocky foot-hills of the range, and next morning looked upon a vast wilderness stretch of woods that undulated to the gentle slopes of the hills, and that night they were on the edge of the blue-grass land.

Toward sunset Dave, through a sixth sense, had the uneasy feeling that he was not only being followed but watched from the cliffs alongside, and he observed that Erskine too had more than once turned in his saddle or lifted his eyes searchingly to the shaggy flanks of the hills. Neither spoke to the other, but that night when the hoot of an owl raised Dave from his blanket, Erskine too was up-

"Four more days," he cried, "and we'll be there!"

right with his rifle in his hand. For half an hour they waited, and lay down again, only to be awakened again by the snort of a horse, when both sprang to their feet and crawled out toward the sound. But the heavy silence lay unbroken and they brought the horses closer to the fire.

"Now I *know* it was Indians," said Dave; "that hoss o' mine can smell one further'n a rattlesnake." The boy nodded and they took turns on watch while the two boys slept on till daylight. The trail was broad enough next morning for them to ride two abreast—Dave and Erskine in advance. They had scarcely gone a hundred yards when an Indian stepped into the path twenty yards ahead. Instinctively Dave threw his rifle up, but Erskine caught his arm. The Indian had lifted his hand—palm upward. "Shawnee!" said the lad, as two more appeared from the bushes. The eyes of the two tidewater boys grew large, and both clinched their guns convulsively. The Indian spokesman paid no heed except to Erskine—and only from the lad's face, in which surprise was succeeded by sorrow and then deep thought-

fulness, could they guess what the guttural speech meant, until Erskine turned to them.

They were not on the war-path against the whites, he explained. His foster-father—Kahtoo, the big chief, the king—was very ill, and his message, brought by them, was that Erskine should come back to the tribe and become chief, as the chief's only daughter was dead and his only son had been killed by the palefaces. They knew that in the fight at the fort Erskine had killed the Shawnee, his tormentor, for they knew the arrow, which Erskine had not had time to withdraw. The dead Shawnee's brother—Crooked Lightning—was with them. He it was who had recognized the boy the day before, and they had kept him from killing Erskine from the bushes. At that moment a gigantic savage stepped from the brush. The boy's frame quivered, straightened, grew rigid, but he met the malevolent glare turned on him with emotionless face and himself quietly began to speak while Harry and Hugh and even Dave watched him enthralled; for the lad was Indian now and the old chief's mantle was about his shoulders. He sat his horse like a king and spoke as a

king. He thanked them for holding back Crooked Lightning's evil hand, but—contemptuously he spat toward the huge savage—he was not to die by that hand. He was a paleface and the Indians had slain his white mother. He had forgiven that, for he loved the old chief and his foster mother and brother and sister, and the tribe had always been kind to him. Then they had killed his white father and he had gone to visit his kindred by the big waters, and now he loved *them*. He had fled from the Shawnees because of the cruelty of Crooked Lightning's brother whom he had slain. But if the Indians were falling into evil ways and following evil counsels, his heart was sad.

"I will come when the leaves fall," he concluded, "but Crooked Lightning must pitch his lodge in the wilderness and be an outcast from the tribe until he can show that his heart is good." And then with an imperious gesture he waved his hand toward the west:

"Now go!"

It was hard even for Dave to realize that the lad, to all purposes, was actually then the

chief of a powerful tribe, and even he was a little awed by the instant obedience of the savages, who, without a word, melted into the bushes and disappeared. Harry wished that Barbara had been there to see, and Hugh was open-mouthed with astonishment and wonder, and Dave recovered himself with a little chuckle only when without a word Erskine clucked Firefly forward, quite unconsciously taking the lead. And Dave humored him; nor was it many hours before the lad ceased to be chief, although he did not wholly become himself again until they were near the fort. It was nearing sunset and from a little hill Dave pointed to a thin blue wisp of smoke rising far ahead from the green expanse.

"There it is, boys!" he cried. All the horses were tired except Firefly and with a whoop Erskine darted forward and disappeared. They followed as fast as they could and they heard the report of the boy's rifle and the series of war-whoops with which he was heralding his approach. Nobody in the fort was fearful, for plainly it was no unfriendly coming. All were gathered at the big gate and there were many yells and cries

of welcome and wonder when the boy swept into the clearing on a run, brandishing his rifle above his head, and pulled his fiery black horse up in front of them.

"Whar'd you steal that hoss?" shouted Bud.

"Look at them clothes!" cried Jack Sanders. And the women—Mother Sanders, Mother Noe, and Lydia and Honor and Polly Conrad—gathered about him, laughing, welcoming, shaking hands, and asking questions.

"Where's Dave?" That was the chief question and asked by several voices at the same time. The boy looked grave.

"Dave ain't comin' back," he said, and then seeing the look on Lydia's face, he smiled: "Dave—" He had no further to go, for Dave's rifle cracked and his voice rose from the woods, and he and Harry and Hugh galloped into the clearing. Then were there more whoopings and greetings, and Lydia's starting tears turned to smiles.

Healthy, husky, rude, and crude these people were, but hearty, kind, wholesome, and hospitable to the last they had. Naturally the young people and the two boys

from the James were mutually shy, but it was plain that the shyness would soon wear off. Before dark the men came in: old Jerome and the Noe brothers and others who were strangers even to Dave, for in his absence many adventurers had come along the wilderness trail and were arriving all the time. Already Erskine and Bud had shown the two stranger boys around the fort; had told them of the last fight with the Indians, and pointed out the outer walls pockmarked with bullet-holes. Supper was in the open—the women serving and the men seated about on buffalo-skins and deer-hides. Several times Hugh or Harry would spring up to help serve, until Polly turned on Hugh sharply:

"You set still!" and then she smiled at him.

"You'll spile us—but I know a lot o' folks that might learn manners from you two boys."

Both were embarrassed. Dave laughed, Bud Sanders grunted, and Erskine paid no heed. All the time the interchange of news and experiences was going on. Dave had to tell about his trip and Erskine's races—

for the lad would say nothing—and in turn followed stories of killing buffalo, deer, panther, and wildcat during his absence. Early the women disappeared, soon the men began to yawn and stretch, and the sentineis went to the watch-towers, for there had been Indian signs that day. This news thrilled the eastern lads, and they too turned into the same bed built out from the wall of one of the cabins and covered with bearskins. And Harry, just before his eyes closed, saw through the open door Erskine seated alone by the dying fire in deep thought—Erskine, the connecting-link between the tide-water aristocrats and these rude pioneers, between these backwoodsmen and the savage enemies out in the black encircling wilderness. And that boy's brain was in a turmoil—what was to be his fate, there, here, or out there where he had promised to go at the next falling of the leaves?

X

The green of the wilderness dulled and burst into the yellow of the buckeye, the scarlet of maple, and the russet of oak. This glory in turn dulled and the leaves, like petals of withered flowers, began to drift to the earth. Through the shower of them went Erskine and Firefly, who had become as used to the wilds as to the smiling banks of the far-away James, for no longer did some strange scent make his nostrils quiver or some strange sound point his beautiful ears and make him crouch and shudder, or some shadow or shaft of light make him shy and leap like a deer aside. And the two now were one in mutual affection and a mutual understanding that was uncanny. A brave picture the lad made of those lone forerunners whose tent was the wilderness and whose goal was the Pacific slope. From his coonskin cap the bushy tail hung like a plume; his deerskin hunting-shirt, made by old Mother Sanders, was beaded and fringed — fringed across the breast,

at the wrists, and at the hem, and girded by a belt from which the horned handle of a scalping-knife showed in front and the head of a tomahawk behind; his powder-horn swung under one shoulder and his bullet-pouch, wadding, flint, and steel under the other; his long rifle across his saddle-bow. And fringed too were his breeches and beaded were his moccasins. Dave had laughed at him as a backwoods dandy and then checked himself, so dignified was the boy and grave; he was the son of a king again, and as such was on his way in answer to the wish of a king. For food he carried only a little sack of salt, for his rifle would bring him meat and the forest would give him nuts and fruit. When the sun was nearing its highest, he "barked" a squirrel from the trunk of a beech; toward sunset a fat pheasant fluttered from the ground to a low limb and he shot its head off and camped for the night. Hickory-nuts, walnuts, and chestnuts were abundant. Persimmons and papaws were ripe, haws and huckleberries were plentiful. There were wild cherries and even wild plums, and when he wished he could pluck a handful of wild grapes

from a vine by the trail and munch them as he rode along. For something sweet he could go to the pod of the honey-locust.

On the second day he reached the broad buffalo trail that led to the salt-licks and on to the river, and then memories came. He remembered a place where the Indians had camped after they had captured himself and his mother. In his mind was a faint picture of her sitting against a tree and weeping and of an Indian striking her to make her stop and of himself leaping at the savage like a little wildcat, whereat the others laughed like children. Farther on, next day, was the spot where the Indians had separated them and he saw his mother no more. They told him that she had been taken back to the whites, but he was told later that they had killed her because in their flight from the whites she was holding them back too much. Farther on was a spot where they had hurried from the trail and thrust him into a hollow log, barring the exit with stones, and had left him for a day and a night.

On the fourth day he reached the river and swam it holding rifle and powder-horn

above his head. On the seventh he was nearing the village where the sick chief lay, and when he caught sight of the teepees in a little creek bottom, he fired his rifle, and putting Firefly into a gallop and with right hand high swept into the village. Several bucks had caught up bow or rifle at the report of the gun and the clatter of hoofs, but their hands relaxed when they saw his sign of peace. The squaws gathered and there were grunts of recognition and greeting when the boy pulled up in their midst. The flaps of the chief's tent parted and his foster-mother started toward him with a sudden stream of tears and turned quickly back. The old chief's keen black eyes were waiting for her and he spoke before she could open her lips:

"White Arrow! It is well. Here—at once!"

Erskine had swung from his horse and followed. The old chief measured him from head to foot slowly and his face grew content:

"Show me the horse!"

The boy threw back the flaps of the tent and with a gesture bade an Indian to lead Firefly to and fro. The horse even thrust

his beautiful head over his master's shoulder and looked within, snorting gently. Kahtoo waved dismissal:

"You must ride north soon to carry the white wampum and a peace talk. And when you go you must hurry back, for when the sun is highest on the day after you return, my spirit will pass."

And thereupon he turned his face and went back into sleep. Already his foster-mother had unsaddled and tethered Firefly and given him a feed of corn; and yet bucks, squaws, girls, and pappooses were still gathered around him, for some had not seen his like before, and of the rest none failed to feel the change that had taken place in him. Had the lad in truth come to win and make good his chieftainship, he could not have made a better beginning, and there was not a maid in camp in whose eyes there was not far more than curiosity—young as he was. Just before sunset rifle-shots sounded in the distance —the hunters were coming in—and the accompanying whoops meant great success. Each of three bucks carried a deer over his shoulders, and foremost of the three was

Crooked Lightning, who barely paused when he saw Erskine, and then with an insolent glare and grunt passed him and tossed his deer at the feet of the squaws. The boy's hand slipped toward the handle of his tomahawk, but some swift instinct kept him still. The savage must have had good reason for such open defiance, for the lad began to feel that many others shared in his hostility and he began to wonder and speculate.

Quickly the feast was prepared and the boy ate apart—his foster-mother bringing him food—but he could hear the story of the day's hunting and the allusions to the prowess of Crooked Lightning's son, Black Wolf, who was Erskine's age, and he knew they were but slurs against himself. When the dance began his mother pointed toward it, meaning that he should take part, but he shook his head—and his thoughts went backward to his friends at the fort and on back to the big house on the James, to Harry and Hugh—and Barbara; and he wondered what they would think if they could see him there; could see the gluttonous feast and those naked savages stamping around the fire with barbaric grunts

and cries to the thumping of a drum. Where did he belong?

Fresh wood was thrown on the fire, and as its light leaped upward the lad saw an aged Indian emerge from one of two tents that sat apart on a little rise—saw him lift both hands toward the stars for a moment and then return within.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"The new prophet," said his mother. "He has been but one moon here and has much power over our young men."

An armful of pine fagots was tossed on the blaze, and in a whiter leap of light he saw the face of a woman at the other tent—saw her face and for a moment met her eyes before she shrank back—and neither face nor eyes belonged to an Indian. Startled, he caught his mother by the wrist and all but cried out:

"And that?" The old woman hesitated and scowled:

"A paleface. Kahtoo bought her and adopted her but"—the old woman gave a little guttural cluck of triumph—"she dies to-morrow. Kahtoo will burn her."

"Burn her?" burst out the boy.

"The palefaces have killed many of Kahtoo's kin!"

A little later when he was passing near the white woman's tent a girl sat in front of it pounding corn in a mortar. She looked up at him and, staring, smiled. She had the skin of the half-breed, and he stopped, startled by that fact and her beauty—and went quickly on. At old Kahtoo's lodge he could not help turning to look at her again, and this time she rose quickly and slipped within the tent. He turned to find his foster-mother watching him.

"Who is that girl?" The old woman looked displeased.

"Daughter of the white woman."

"Does she know?"

"Neither knows."

"What is her name?"

"Early Morn."

Early Morn and daughter of the white woman—he would like to know more of those two, and he half turned, but the old Indian woman caught him by the arm:

"Do not go there—you will only make more trouble."

He followed the flash of her eyes to the edge of the firelight where a young Indian stood watching and scowling:

"Who is that?"

"Black Wolf, son of Crooked Lightning."

"Ah!" thought Erskine.

Within the old chief called faintly and the Indian woman motioned the lad to go within. The old man's dim eyes had a new fire.

"Talk!" he commanded and motioned to the ground, but the lad did not squat Indian fashion, but stood straight with arms folded, and the chief knew that a conflict was coming. Narrowly he watched White Arrow's face and bearing—uneasily felt the strange new power of him.

"I have been with my own people," said the lad simply, "the palefaces who have come over the big mountains and have built forts and planted corn, and they were kind to me. I went over those mountains, on and on almost to the big waters. I found my kin. They are many and strong and rich. They have big houses of stone such as I had never seen nor heard of and they plant more corn than all the Shawnees and Iroquois. They, too,

were kind to me. I came because you had been kind and because you were sick and because you had sent for me, and to keep my word.

"I have seen Crooked Lightning. His heart is bad. I have seen the new prophet. I do not like him. And I have seen the white woman that you are to burn to-morrow." The lad stopped. His every word had been of defense or indictment and more than once the old chief's eyes shifted uneasily.

"Why did you leave us?"

"To see my people and because of Crooked Lightning and his brother."

"You fought us."

"Only the brother, and I killed him." The dauntless mien of the boy, his steady eyes, and his bold truthfulness, pleased the old man. The lad must take his place as chief. Now White Arrow turned questioner:

"I told you I would come when the leaves fell and I am here. Why is Crooked Lightning here? Why is the new prophet? Who is the woman? What has she done that she must die? What is the peace talk you wish me to carry north?"

The old man hesitated long with closed eyes. When he opened them the fire was gone and they were dim again.

"The story of the prophet and Crooked Lightning is too long," he said wearily. "I will tell to-morrow. The woman must die because her people have slain mine. Besides, she is growing blind and is a trouble. You carry the white wampum to a council. The Shawnees may join the British against our enemies—the palefaces."

"I will wait," said the lad. "I will carry the white wampum. If you war against the paleface on this side of the mountain—I am your enemy. If you war with the British against them all—I am your enemy. And the woman must not die."

"I have spoken," said the old man.

"*I* have spoken," said the boy. He turned to lie down and went to sleep. The old man sat on, staring out at the stars.

Just outside the tent a figure slipped away as noiselessly as a snake. When it rose and emerged from the shadows the firelight showed the malignant, triumphant face of Crooked Lightning.

XI

The Indian boys were plunging into the river when Erskine appeared at the opening of the old chief's tent next morning, and when they came out icicles were clinging to their hair. He had forgotten the custom and he shrugged his shoulders at his mother's inquiring look. But the next morning when Crooked Lightning's son Black Wolf passed him with a taunting smile he changed his mind.

"Wait!" he said. He turned, stripped quickly to a breech-clout, pointed to a beech down and across the river, challenging Black Wolf to a race. Together they plunged in and the boy's white body clove through the water like the arrow that he was. At the beech he whipped about to meet the angry face of his competitor ten yards behind. Half-way back he was more than twenty yards ahead when he heard a strangled cry. Perhaps it was a ruse to cover the humiliation of defeat, but

when he saw bucks rushing for the river-bank he knew that the icy water had brought a cramp to Black Wolf, so he turned, caught the lad by his topknot, towed him shoreward, dropped him contemptuously, and stalked back to his tent. The girl Early Morn stood smiling at her lodge and her eyes followed his white figure until it disappeared. His mother had built a fire for him, and the old chief looked pleased and proud.

"My spirit shall not pass," he said, and straightway he rose and dressed, and to the astonishment of the tribe emerged from his tent and walked firmly about the village until he found Crooked Lightning.

"You would have Black Wolf chief," he said. "Very well. We shall see who can show the better right—your son or White Arrow"—a challenge that sent Crooked Lightning to brood awhile in his tent, and then secretly to consult the prophet.

Later the old chief talked long to White Arrow. The prophet, he said, had been with them but a little while. He claimed that the Great Spirit had made revelations to him alone. What manner of man was he, ques-

tioned the boy—did he have ponies and pelts and jerked meat?

"He is poor," said the chief. "He has only a wife and children and the tribe feeds him."

White Arrow himself grunted—it was the first sign of his old life stirring within him.

"Why should the Great Spirit pick out such a man to favor?" he asked. The chief shook his head.

"He makes muzzi-neen for the young men, shows them where to find game and they find it."

"But game is plentiful," persisted the lad.

"You will hear him drumming in the woods at night."

"I heard him last night and I thought he was a fool to frighten the game away."

"Crooked Lightning has found much favor with him, and in turn with the others, so that I have not thought it wise to tell Crooked Lightning that he must go. He has stirred up the young men against me—and against you. They were waiting for me to die." The boy looked thoughtful and the chief waited. He had not reached the aim of his

speech and there was no need to put it in words, for White Arrow understood.

"I will show them," he said quietly.

When the two appeared outside, many braves had gathered, for the whole village knew what was in the wind. Should it be a horse-race first? Crooked Lightning looked at the boy's thoroughbred and shook his head —Indian ponies would as well try to outrun an arrow, a bullet, a hurricane.

A foot-race? The old chief smiled when Crooked Lightning shook his head again— no brave in the tribe even could match the speed that gave the lad his name. The bow and arrow, the rifle, the tomahawk? Perhaps the pole-dance of the Sioux? The last suggestion seemed to make Crooked Lightning angry, for a rumor was that Crooked Lightning was a renegade Sioux and had been shamed from the tribe because of his evasion of that same pole-dance. Old Kahtoo had humor as well as sarcasm. Tomahawks and bows and arrows were brought out. Black Wolf was half a head shorter, but stocky and powerfully built. White Arrow's sinews had strengthened, but he had scarcely used bow

and tomahawk since he had left the tribe. His tomahawk whistled more swiftly through the air and buried itself deeper into the tree, and his arrows flashed faster and were harder to pull out. He had the power but not the practice, and Black Wolf won with great ease. When they came to the rifle, Black Wolf was out of the game, for never a bull's-eye did White Arrow miss.

"To-morrow," said the old chief, "they shall hunt. Each shall take his bow and the same number of arrows at sunrise and return at sundown. . . . The next day they shall do the same with the rifle. It is enough for to-day."

The first snow fell that night, and at dawn the two lads started out—each with a bow and a dozen arrows. Erskine's woodcraft had not suffered and the night's story of the wilderness was as plain to his keen eyes as a printed page. Nothing escaped them, no matter how minute the signs. Across the patch where corn had been planted, field-mice had left tracks like stitched seams. Crows had been after crawfish along the edge of the stream and a mink after minnows. A musk-

rat had crossed the swamp beyond. In the woods, wind-blown leaves had dotted and dashed the snow like a stenographer's note-book. Here a squirrel had leaped along, his tail showing occasionally in the snow, and there was the four-pointed, triangle-track of a cottontail. The wide-spreading toes of a coon had made this tracery; moles had made these snowy ridges over their galleries, and this long line of stitched tracks was the trail of the fearless skunk which came to a sudden end in fur, feathers, and bones where the great horned owl had swooped down on him, the only creature that seems not to mind his smell. Here was the print of a pheasant's wing, and buds and bits of twigs on the snow were the scattered remnants of his breakfast. Here was the spring hole that never freezes—the drinking-cup for the little folks of the woods. Here a hawk had been after a rabbit, and the lengthening distance between his triangles showed how he had speeded up in flight. He had scudded under thick briers and probably had gotten away. But where was the big game? For two hours he tramped swiftly, but never sign of deer, elk, bear, or buffalo.

And then an hour later he heard a snort from a thick copse and the crash of an unseen body in flight through the brush, and he loped after its tracks.

Black Wolf came in at sunset with a bear cub which he had found feeding apart from its mother. He was triumphant, and Crooked Lightning was scornful when White Arrow appeared empty-handed. His left wrist was bruised and swollen, and there was a gash the length of his forearm.

"Follow my tracks back," he said, "until you come to the kill." With a whoop two Indians bounded away and in an hour returned with a buck.

"I ran him down," said White Arrow, "and killed him with the knife. He horned me," and went into his tent.

The bruised wrist and wounded forearm made no matter, for the rifle was the weapon next day—but White Arrow went another way to look for game. Each had twelve bullets. Black Wolf came in with a deer and one bullet. White Arrow told them where they could find a deer, a bear, a buffalo, and an elk, and he showed eight bullets in the

palm of his hand. And he noted now that the Indian girl was always an intent observer of each contest, and that she always went swiftly back to her tent to tell his deeds to the white woman within.

There was a feast and a dance that night, and Kahtoo could have gone to his fathers and left the lad, young as he was, as chief, but not yet was he ready, and Crooked Lightning, too, bided his time.

XII

Dressed as an Indian, Erskine rode forth next morning with a wampum belt and a talk for the council north where the British were to meet Shawnee, Iroquois, and Algonquin, and urge them to enter the great war that was just breaking forth. There was open and angry protest against sending so young a lad on so great a mission, but the old chief haughtily brushed it aside:

"He is young but his feet are swift, his arm is strong, his heart good, and his head is old. He speaks the tongue of the pale-face. Besides, he is my son."

One question the boy asked as he made ready:

"The white woman must not be burned while I am gone?"

"No," promised the old chief. And so White Arrow fared forth. Four days he rode through the north woods, and on the fifth he strode through the streets of a town

that was yet filled with great forest trees: a town at which he had spent three winters when the game was scarce and the tribe had moved north for good. He lodged with no chief but slept in the woods with his feet to the fire. The next night he slipped to the house of the old priest, Father André, who had taught him some religion and a little French, and the old man welcomed him as a son, though he noted sadly his Indian dress and was distressed when he heard the lad's mission. He was quickly relieved.

"I am no royalist," he said.

"Nor am I," said Erskine. "I came because Kahtoo, who seemed nigh to death, begged me to come. There is much intrigue about him, and he could trust no other. I am only a messenger and I shall speak his talk; but my heart is with the Americans and I shall fight with them." The old priest put his fingers to his lips:

"Sh—h—h! It is not wise. Are you not known?"

Erskine hesitated.

Earlier that morning he had seen three officers riding in. Following was a youth

not in uniform though he carried a sword. On the contrary, he was dressed like an English dandy, and then he found himself face to face with Dane Grey. With no sign of recognition the boy had met his eyes squarely and passed on.

"There is but one man who does know me and he did not recognize me. His name is Dane Grey. I am wondering what he is doing here. Can you find out for me and let me know?" The old priest nodded and Erskine slipped back to the woods.

At sunrise the great council began. On his way Erskine met Grey, who apparently was leaving with a band of traders for Detroit. Again Erskine met his eyes and this time Grey smiled:

"Aren't you White Arrow?" Somehow the tone with which he spoke the name was an insult.

"Yes."

"Then it's true. We heard that you had left your friends at the fort and become an Indian again."

"Yes?"

"So you are not only going to fight with

the Indians against the whites, but with the British against America?"

"What I am going to do is no business of yours," Erskine said quietly, "but I hope we shall not be on the same side. We may meet again."

Grey's face was already red with drink and it turned purple with anger.

"When you tried to stab me do you remember what I said?" Erskine nodded contemptuously.

"Well, I repeat it. Whatever the side, I'll fight you anywhere at any time and in any way you please."

"Why not now?"

"This is not the time for private quarrels and you know it."

Erskine bowed slightly—an act that came oddly from an Indian head-dress.

"I can wait—and I shall not forget. The day will come."

The old priest touched Erskine's shoulder as the angry youth rode away.

"I cannot make it out," he said. "He claims to represent an English fur company. His talk is British but he told one man—last

night when he was drunk—that he could have a commission in the American army."

The council-fire was built, the flames crackled and the smoke rolled upward and swept through the leafless trees. Three British agents sat on blankets and around them the chiefs were ringed. All day the powwow lasted. Each agent spoke and the burden of his talk varied very little.

The American palefaces had driven the Indian over the great wall. They were killing his deer, buffalo, and elk, robbing him of his land and pushing him ever backward. They were many and they would become more. The British were the Indian's friends —the Americans were his enemies and theirs; could they choose to fight with their enemies rather than with their friends? Each chief answered in turn, and each cast forward his wampum until only Erskine, who had sat silent, remained, and Pontiac himself turned to him.

"What says the son of Kahtoo?"

Even as he rose the lad saw creeping to the outer ring his enemy Crooked Lightning, but he appeared not to see. The whites looked

surprised when his boyish figure stood straight, and they were amazed when he addressed the traders in French, the agents in English, and spoke to the feathered chiefs in their own tongue. He cast the belt forward.

"That is Kahtoo's talk, but this is mine."

Who had driven the Indian from the great waters to the great wall? The British. Who were the Americans until now? British. Why were the Americans fighting now? Because the British, their kinsmen, would not give them their rights. If the British would drive the Indian to the great wall, would they not go on doing what they charged the Americans with doing now? If the Indians must fight, why fight with the British to beat the Americans, and then have to fight both a later day? If the British would not treat their own kinsmen fairly, was it likely that they would treat the Indian fairly? They had never done so yet. Would it not be better for the Indian to make the white man on his own land a friend rather than the white man who lived more than a moon away across the big seas? Only one gesture the lad made. He lifted his hand high and paused. Crooked

"That is Kahtoo's talk, but this is mine"

Lightning had sprung to his feet with a hoarse cry. Already the white men had grown uneasy, for the chiefs had turned to the boy with startled interest at his first sentence and they could not know what he was saying. But they looked relieved when Crooked Lightning rose, for his was the only face in the assembly that was hostile to the boy. With a gesture Pontiac bade Crooked Lightning speak.

"The tongue of White Arrow is forked. I have heard him say he would fight with the Long Knives against the British and he would fight with them even against his own tribe." One grunt of rage ran the round of three circles and yet Pontiac stopped Crooked Lightning and turned to the lad. Slowly the boy's uplifted hand came down. With a bound he leaped through the head-dress of a chief in the outer ring and sped away through the village. Some started on foot after him, some rushed to their ponies, and some sent arrows and bullets after him. At the edge of the village the boy gave a loud, clear call and then another as he ran. Something black sprang snorting from the edge of the woods

with pointed ears and searching eyes. Another call came and like the swirling edge of a hurricane-driven thunder-cloud Firefly swept after his master. The boy ran to meet him, caught one hand in his mane before he stopped, swung himself up, and in a hail of arrows and bullets swept out of sight.

XIII

The sound of pursuit soon died away, but Erskine kept Firefly at his best, for he knew that Crooked Lightning would be quick and fast on his trail. He guessed, too, that Crooked Lightning had already told the tribe what he had just told the council, and that he and the prophet had already made all use of the boy's threat to Kahtoo in the Shawnee town. He knew even that it might cost him his life if he went back there, and once or twice he started to turn through the wilderness and go back to the fort. Winter was on, and he had neither saddle nor bridle, but neither fact bothered him. It was the thought of the white woman who was to be burned that kept him going and sent him openly and fearlessly into the town. He knew from the sullen looks that met him, from the fear in the faces of his foster-mother and the white woman who peered blindly

from her lodge, and from the triumphant leer of the prophet that his every suspicion was true, but all the more leisurely did he swing from his horse, all the more haughtily stalk to Kahtoo's tent. And the old chief looked very grave when the lad told the story of the council and all that he had said and done.

"The people are angry. They say you are a traitor and a spy. They say you must die. And I cannot help you. I am too old and the prophet is too strong."

"And the white woman?"

"She will not burn. Some fur traders have been here. The white chief McGee sent me a wampum belt and a talk. His messenger brought much fire-water and he gave me that"—he pointed to a silver-mounted rifle—"and I promised that she should live. But I cannot help you." Erskine thought quickly. He laid his rifle down, stepped slowly outside, and stretched his arms with a yawn. Then still leisurely he moved toward his horse as though to take care of it. But the braves were too keen and watchful and they were not fooled by the fact that he had

left his rifle behind. Before he was close enough to leap for Firefly's back, three bucks darted from behind a lodge and threw themselves upon him. In a moment he was face down on the ground, his hands were tied behind his back, and when turned over he looked up into the grinning face of Black Wolf, who with the help of another brave dragged him to a lodge and roughly threw him within, and left him alone. On the way he saw his foster-mother's eyes flashing helplessly, saw the girl Early Morn indignantly telling her mother what was going on, and the white woman's face was wet with tears. He turned over so that he could look through the tent-flaps. Two bucks were driving a stake in the centre of the space around which the lodges were ringed. Two more were bringing fagots of wood and it was plain what was going to become of him. His foster-mother, who was fiercely haranguing one of the chiefs, turned angrily into Kahtoo's lodge and he could see the white woman rocking her body and wringing her hands. Then the old chief appeared and lifted his hands.

"Crooked Lightning will be very angry.

The prisoner is his—not yours. It is for him to say what the punishment shall be—not for you. Wait for him! Hold a council and if you decide against him, though he is my son—he shall die." For a moment the preparations ceased and all turned to the prophet, who had appeared before his lodge.

"Kahtoo is right," he said. "The Great Spirit will not approve if White Arrow die except by the will of the council—and Crooked Lightning will be angry." There was a chorus of protesting grunts, but the preparations ceased. The boy could feel the malevolence in the prophet's tone and he knew that the impostor wanted to curry further favor with Crooked Lightning and not rob him of the joy of watching his victim's torture. So the braves went back to their fire-water, and soon the boy's foster-mother brought him something to eat, but she could say nothing, for Black Wolf had appointed himself sentinel and sat rifle in hand at the door of the lodge.

Night came on. A wildcat screeched, a panther screamed, and an elk bugled far away. The drinking became more furious and once Erskine saw a pale-brown arm

thrust from behind the lodge and place a jug at the feet of Black Wolf, who grunted and drank deep. The stars mounted into a clear sky and the wind rose and made much noise in the trees overhead. One by one the braves went to drunken sleep about the fire. The fire died down and by the last flickering flame the lad saw Black Wolf's chin sinking sleepily to his chest. There was the slightest rustle behind the tent. He felt something groping for his hands and feet, felt the point of a knife graze the skin of his wrist and ankles —felt the thongs loosen and drop apart. Noiselessly, inch by inch, he crept to the wall of the tent, which was carefully lifted for him. Outside he rose and waited. Like a shadow the girl Early Morn stole before him and like a shadow he followed. The loose snow muffled their feet as the noise of the wind had muffled his escape from the lodge, and in a few minutes they were by the river-bank, away from the town. The moon rose and from the shadow of a beech the white woman stepped forth with his rifle and powder-horn and bullet-pouch and some food. She pointed to his horse a little farther down.

He looked long and silently into the Indian girl's eyes and took the white woman's shaking hand. Once he looked back. The Indian girl was stoic as stone. A bar of moonlight showed the white woman's face wet with tears.

Again Dave Yandell from a watch-tower saw a topknot rise above a patch of cane now leafless and winter-bitten—saw a hand lifted high above it with a palm of peace toward him. And again an Indian youth emerged, this time leading a black horse with a drooping head. Both came painfully on, staggering, it seemed, from wounds or weakness, and Dave sprang from the tower and rushed with others to the gate. He knew the horse and there was dread in his heart; perhaps the approaching Indian had slain the boy, had stolen the horse, and was innocently coming there for food. Well, he thought grimly, revenge would be swift. Still, fearing some trick, he would let no one outside, but himself stood waiting with the gate a little ajar. So gaunt were boy and beast that it was plain that both were starving. The boy's face was torn with briers

and pinched with hunger and cold, but a faint smile came from it.

"Don't you know me, Dave?" he asked weakly.

"My God! It's White Arrow!"

XIV

STRAIGHTWAY the lad sensed a curious change in the attitude of the garrison. The old warmth was absent. The atmosphere was charged with suspicion, hostility. Old Jerome was surly, his old playmates were distant. Only Dave, Mother Sanders, and Lydia were unchanged. The predominant note was curiosity, and they started to ply him with questions, but Dave took him to a cabin, and Mother Sanders brought him something to eat.

"Had a purty hard time," stated Dave. The boy nodded.

"I had only three bullets. Firefly went lame and I had to lead him. I couldn't eat cane and Firefly couldn't eat pheasant. I got one from a hawk," he explained. "What's the matter out there?"

"Nothin'," said Dave gruffly and he made the boy go to sleep. His story came when all

were around the fire at supper, and was listened to with eagerness. Again the boy felt the hostility and it made him resentful and haughty and his story brief and terse. Most fluid and sensitive natures have a chameleon quality, no matter what stratum of adamant be beneath. The boy was dressed like an Indian, he looked like one, and he had brought back, it seemed, the bearing of an Indian—his wildness and stoicism. He spoke like a chief in a council, and even in English his phrasing and metaphors belonged to the red man. No wonder they believed the stories they had heard of him—but there was shame in many faces and little doubt in any save one before he finished.

He had gone to see his foster-mother and his foster-father—old chief Kahtoo, the Shawnee—because he had given his word. Kahtoo thought he was dying and wanted him to be chief when the Great Spirit called. Kahtoo had once saved his life, had been kind, and made him a son. That he could not forget. An evil prophet had come to the tribe and through his enemies, Crooked Lightning and Black Wolf, had gained much in-

fluence. They were to burn a captive white woman as a sacrifice. He had stayed to save her, to argue with old Kahtoo, and carry the wampum and a talk to a big council with the British. He had made his talk and—escaped. He had gone back to his tribe, had been tied, and was to be burned at the stake. Again he had escaped with the help of the white woman and her daughter. The tribes had joined the British and even then they were planning an early attack on this very fort and all others.

The interest was tense and every face was startled at this calm statement of their immediate danger. Dave and Lydia looked triumphant at this proof of their trust, but old Jerome burst out:

"Why did you have to escape from the council—and from the Shawnees?" The boy felt the open distrust and he rose proudly.

"At the council I told the Indians that they should be friends, not enemies, of the Americans, and Crooked Lightning called me a traitor. He had overheard my talk with Kahtoo."

"What was that?" asked Dave quickly.

"I told Kahtoo I would fight with the Americans against the British and Indians; and with *you* against *him!*" And he turned away and went back to the cabin.

"What'd I tell ye!" cried Dave indignantly and he followed the boy, who had gone to his bunk, and put one big hand on his shoulder.

"They thought you'd turned Injun agin," he said, "but it's all right now."

"I know," said the lad and with a muffled sound that was half the grunt of an Indian and half the sob of a white man turned his face away.

Again Dave reached for the lad's shoulder.

"Don't blame 'em too much. I'll tell you now. Some fur traders came by here, and one of 'em said you was goin' to marry an Injun girl named Early Morn; that you was goin' to stay with 'em and fight with 'em alongside the British. Of course I knowed better but——"

"Why," interrupted Erskine, "they must have been the same traders who came to the Shawnee town and brought whiskey."

"That's what the feller said and why folks here believed him."

"Who was he?" demanded Erskine.

"You know him—Dane Grey."

All tried to make amends straightway for the injustice they had done him, but the boy's heart remained sore that their trust was so little. Then, when they gathered all settlers within the fort and made all preparations and no Indians came, many seemed again to get distrustful and the lad was not happy. The winter was long and hard. A blizzard had driven the game west and south and the garrison was hard put to it for food. Every day that the hunters went forth the boy was among them and he did far more than his share in the killing of game. But when winter was breaking, more news came in of the war. The flag that had been fashioned of a soldier's white shirt, an old blue army coat, and a red petticoat was now the Stars and Stripes of the American cause. Burgoyne had not cut off New England, that "head of the rebellion," from the other colonies. On the contrary, the Americans had beaten him at Saratoga and marched his army off under those same Stars and Stripes, and for the first time Erskine heard of gallant Lafayette—how he had run

to Washington with the portentous news from his king—that beautiful, passionate France would now stretch forth her helping hand. And Erskine learned what that news meant to Washington's "naked and starving" soldiers dying on the frozen hillsides of Valley Forge. Then George Rogers Clark had passed the fort on his way to Williamsburg to get money and men for his great venture in the Northwest, and Erskine got a ready permission to accompany him as soldier and guide. After Clark was gone the lad got restless; and one morning when the first breath of spring came he mounted his horse, in spite of arguments and protestations, and set forth for Virginia on the wilderness trail. He was going to join Clark, he said, but more than Clark and the war were drawing him to the outer world. What it was he hardly knew, for he was not yet much given to searching his heart or mind. He did know, however, that some strange force had long been working within him that was steadily growing stronger, was surging now like a flame and swinging him between strange moods of depression and exultation. Perhaps it was but

the spirit of spring in his heart, but with his mind's eye he was ever seeing at the end of his journey the face of his little cousin Barbara Dale.

XV

A STRIKING figure the lad made riding into the old capital one afternoon just before the sun sank behind the western woods. Had it been dusk he might have been thought to be an Indian sprung magically from the wilds and riding into civilization on a stolen thoroughbred. Students no longer wandered through the campus of William and Mary College. Only an occasional maid in silk and lace tripped along the street in high-heeled shoes and clocked stockings, and no coach and four was in sight. The governor's palace, in its great yard amid linden-trees, was closed and deserted. My Lord Dunmore was long in sad flight, as Erskine later learned, and not in his coach with its six milk-white horses. But there was the bust of Sir Walter in front of Raleigh Tavern, and there he drew up, before the steps where he was once nigh to taking Dane Grey's life. A negro servant came forward to care for his horse, but a coal-black young giant leaped around the

corner and seized the bridle with a welcoming cry:

"Marse Erskine! But I knowed Firefly fust." It was Ephraim, the groom who had brought out Barbara's ponies, who had turned the horse over to him for the race at the fair.

"I come frum de plantation fer ole marse," the boy explained. The host of the tavern heard and came down to give his welcome, for any Dale, no matter what his garb, could always have the best in that tavern. More than that, a bewigged solicitor, learning his name, presented himself with the cheerful news that he had quite a little sum of money that had been confided to his keeping by Colonel Dale for his nephew Erskine. A strange deference seemed to be paid him by everybody, which was a grateful change from the suspicion he had left among his pioneer friends. The little tavern was thronged and the air charged with the spirit of war. Indeed, nothing else was talked. My Lord Dunmore had come to a sad and unbemoaned end. He had stayed afar from the battle-field of Point Pleasant and had left stalwart General Lewis to fight Cornstalk and

his braves alone. Later my Lady Dunmore and her sprightly daughters took refuge on a man-of-war—whither my lord soon followed them. His fleet ravaged the banks of the rivers and committed every outrage. His marines set fire to Norfolk, which was in ashes when he weighed anchor and sailed away to more depredations. When he intrenched himself on Gwynn's Island, that same stalwart Lewis opened a heavy cannonade on fleet and island, and sent a ball through the indignant nobleman's flag-ship. Next day he saw a force making for the island in boats, and my lord spread all sail; and so back to merry England, and to Virginia no more. Meanwhile, Mr. Washington had reached Boston and started his duties under the Cambridge elm. Several times during the talk Erskine had heard mentioned the name of Dane Grey. Young Grey had been with Dunmore and not with Lewis at Point Pleasant, and had been conspicuous at the palace through much of the succeeding turmoil—the hint being his devotion to one of the daughters, since he was now an unquestioned loyalist.

Next morning Erskine rode forth along a

sandy road, amidst the singing of birds and through a forest of tiny upshooting leaves, for Red Oaks on the James. He had forsworn Colonel Dale to secrecy as to the note he had left behind giving his birthright to his little cousin Barbara, and he knew the confidence would be kept inviolate. He could recall the road—every turn of it, for the woodsman's memory is faultless—and he could see the merry cavalcade and hear the gay quips and laughter of that other spring day long ago, for to youth even the space of a year is very long ago. But among the faces that blossomed within the old coach, and nodded and danced like flowers in a wind, his mind's eye was fixed on one alone. At the boat-landing he hitched his horse to the low-swung branch of an oak and took the path through tangled rose-bushes and undergrowth along the bank of the river, halting where it would give him forth on the great, broad, grassy way that led to the house among the oaks. There was the sun-dial that had marked every sunny hour since he had been away. For a moment he stood there, and when he stepped into the open he shrank back hastily

—a girl was coming through the opening of boxwood from the house—coming slowly, bareheaded, her hands clasped behind her, her eyes downward. His heart throbbed as he waited, throbbed the more when his ears caught even the soft tread of her little feet, and seemed to stop when she paused at the sun-dial, and as before searched the river with her eyes. And as before the song of negro oarsmen came over the yellow flood, growing stronger as they neared. Soon the girl fluttered a handkerchief and from the single passenger in the stern came an answering flutter of white and a glad cry. At the bend of the river the boat disappeared from Erskine's sight under the bank, and he watched the girl. How she had grown! Her slim figure had rounded and shot upward, and her white gown had dropped to her dainty ankles. Now her face was flushed and her eye flashed with excitement—it was no mere kinsman in that boat, and the boy's heart began to throb again—throb fiercely and with racking emotions that he had never known before. A fiery-looking youth sprang up the landing-steps, bowed gallantly over the girl's hand, and the two

turned up the path, the girl rosy with smiles and the youth bending over her with a most protecting and tender air. It was Dane Grey, and the heart of the watcher turned mortal sick.

XVI

A LONG time Erskine sat motionless, wondering what ailed him. He had never liked nor trusted Grey; he believed he would have trouble with him some day, but he had other enemies and he did not feel toward them as he did toward this dandy mincing up that beautiful broad path. With a little grunt he turned back along the path. Firefly whinnied to him and nipped at him with playful restlessness as though eager to be on his way to the barn, and he stood awhile with one arm across his saddle. Once he reached upward to untie the reins, and with another grunt strode back and went rapidly up the path. Grey and Barbara had disappeared, but a tall youth who sat behind one of the big pillars saw him coming and rose, bewildered, but not for long. Each recognized the other swiftly, and Hugh came with stiff courtesy forward. Erskine smiled:

"You don't know me?" Hugh bowed:

"Quite well." The woodsman drew him-

self up with quick breath—paling without, flaming within—but before he could speak there was a quick step and an astonished cry within the hall and Harry sprang out.

"Erskine! Erskine!" he shouted, and he leaped down the steps with both hands outstretched. "You here! You—you old Indian—how did you get here?" He caught Erskine by both hands and then fell to shaking him by the shoulders. "Where's your horse?" And then he noticed the boy's pale and embarrassed face and his eyes shifting to Hugh, who stood, still cold, still courteous, and he checked some hot outburst at his lips.

"I'm glad you've come, and I'm glad you've come right now—where's your horse?"

"I left him hitched at the landing," Erskine had to answer, and Harry looked puzzled:

"The landing! Why, what—" He wheeled and shouted to a darky:

"Put Master Erskine's horse in the barn and feed him." And he led Erskine within—to the same room where he had slept before, and poured out some water in a bowl.

"Take your time," he said, and he went back to the porch. Erskine could hear and see him through the latticed blinds.

"Hugh," said the lad in a low, cold voice, "I am host here, and if you don't like this you can take that path."

"You are right," was the answer; "but you wait until Uncle Harry gets home."

The matter was quite plain to Erskine within. The presence of Dane Grey made it plain, and as Erskine dipped both hands into the cold water he made up his mind to an understanding with that young gentleman that would be complete and final. And so he was ready when he and Harry were on the porch again and Barbara and Grey emerged from the rose-bushes and came slowly up the path. Harry looked worried, but Erskine sat still, with a faint smile at his mouth and in his eyes. Barbara saw him first and she did not rush forward. Instead she stopped, with wide eyes, a stifled cry, and a lifting of one hand toward her heart. Grey saw too, flushed rather painfully, and calmed himself. Erskine had sprung down the steps.

"Why, have I changed so much?" he cried.

"Hugh didn't seem to know me, either." His voice was gay, friendly, even affectionate, but his eyes danced with strange lights that puzzled the girl.

"Of course I knew you," she faltered, paling a little but gathering herself rather haughtily —a fact that Erskine seemed not to notice. "You took me by surprise and you have changed—but I don't know how much." The significance of this too seemed to pass Erskine by, for he bent over Barbara's hand and kissed it.

"Never to you, my dear cousin," he said gallantly, and then he bowed to Dane Grey, not offering to shake hands.

"Of course I know Mr. Grey." To say that the gentleman was dumfounded is to put it mildly—this wild Indian playing the courtier with exquisite impudence and doing it well! Harry seemed like to burst with restrained merriment, and Barbara was sorely put to it to keep her poise. The great dinner-bell from behind the house boomed its summons to the woods and fields.

"Come on," called Harry. "I imagine you're hungry, cousin."

"I am," said Erskine. "I've had nothing to eat since—since early morn." Barbara's eyes flashed upward and Grey was plainly startled. Was there a slight stress on those two words? Erskine's face was as expressionless as bronze. Harry had bolted into the hall.

Mrs. Dale was visiting down the river, so Barbara sat in her mother's place, with Erskine at her right, Grey to her left, Hugh next to him, and Harry at the head. Harry did not wait long.

"Now, you White Arrow, you Big Chief, tell us the story. Where have you been, what have you been doing, and what do you mean to do? I've heard a good deal, but I want it all."

Grey began to look uncomfortable, and so, in truth, did Barbara.

"What have you heard?" asked Erskine quietly.

"Never mind," interposed Barbara quickly; "you tell us."

"Well," began Erskine slowly, "you remember that day we met some Indians who told me that old Kahtoo, my foster-father, was

ill, and that he wanted to see me before he died? I went exactly as I would have gone had white men given the same message from Colonel Dale, and even for better reasons. A bad prophet was stirring up trouble in the tribe against the old chief. An enemy of mine, Crooked Lightning, was helping him. He wanted his son, Black Wolf, as chief, and the old chief wanted me. I heard the Indians were going to join the British. I didn't want to be chief, but I did want influence in the tribe, so I stayed. There was a white woman in the camp and an Indian girl named Early Morn. I told the old chief that I would fight with the whites against the Indians and with the whites against them both. Crooked Lightning overheard me, and you can imagine what use he made of what I said. I took the wampum belt for the old chief to the powwow between the Indians and the British, and I found I could do nothing. I met Mr. Grey there." He bowed slightly to Dane and then looked at him steadily. "I was told that he was there in the interest of an English fur company. When I found I could do nothing with the Indians, I told the council what

I had told the old chief." He paused. Barbara's face was pale and she was breathing hard. She had not looked at Grey, but Harry had been watching him covertly and he did not look comfortable. Erskine paused.

"What!" shouted Harry. "You told both that you would fight with the whites against both! What'd they do to you?"

Erskine smiled.

"Well, here I am. I jumped over the heads of the outer ring and ran. Firefly heard me calling him. I had left his halter loose. He broke away. I jumped on him, and you know nothing can catch Firefly."

"Didn't they shoot at you?"

"Of course." Again he paused.

"Well," said Harry impatiently, "that isn't the end."

"I went back to the camp. Crooked Lightning followed me and they tied me and were going to burn me at the stake."

"Good heavens!" breathed Barbara.

"How'd you get away?"

"The Indian girl, Early Morn, slipped under the tent and cut me loose. The white woman got my gun, and Firefly—you know

nothing can catch Firefly." The silence was intense. Hugh looked dazed, Barbara was on the point of tears, Harry was triumphant, and Grey was painfully flushed.

"And you want to know what I am going to do now?" Erskine went on. "I'm going with Captain George Rogers Clark—with what command are you, Mr. Grey?"

"That's a secret," he smiled coolly. "I'll let you know later," and Barbara, with an inward sigh of relief, rose quickly, but would not leave them behind.

"But the white woman?" questioned Harry. "Why doesn't she leave the Indians?"

"Early Morn—a half-breed—is her daughter," said Erskine simply.

"Oh!" and Harry questioned no further.

"Early Morn was the best-looking Indian girl I ever saw," said Erskine, "and the bravest." For the first time Grey glanced at Barbara. "She saved my life," Erskine went on gravely, "and mine is hers whenever she needs it." Harry reached over and gripped his hand.

As yet not one word had been said of Grey's misdoing, but Barbara's cool disdain made

him shamed and hot, and in her eyes was the sorrow of her injustice to Erskine. In the hallway she excused herself with a courtesy, Hugh went to the stables, Harry disappeared for a moment, and the two were left alone. With smouldering fire Erskine turned to Grey.

"It seems you have been amusing yourself with my kinspeople at my expense." Grey drew himself up in haughty silence. Erskine went on:

"I have known some liars who were not cowards."

"You forget yourself."

"No—nor you."

"You remember a promise I made you once?"

"Twice," corrected Erskine. Grey's eyes flashed upward to the crossed rapiers on the wall.

"Precisely," answered Erskine, "and when?"

"At the first opportunity."

"From this moment I shall be waiting for nothing else."

Barbara, reappearing, heard their last

words, and she came forward pale and with piercing eyes:

"Cousin Erskine, I want to apologize to you for my little faith. I hope you will forgive me. Mr. Grey, your horse will be at the door at once. I wish you a safe journey —to your command." Grey bowed and turned—furious.

Erskine was on the porch when Grey came out to mount his horse.

"You will want seconds?" asked Grey.

"They might try to stop us—no!"

"I shall ride slowly," Grey said. Erskine bowed.

"I shall not."

XVII

Nor did he. Within half an hour Barbara, passing through the hall, saw that the rapiers were gone from the wall and she stopped, with the color fled from her face and her hand on her heart. At that moment Ephraim dashed in from the kitchen.

"Miss Barbary, somebody gwine to git killed. I was wukkin' in de ole field an' Marse Grey rid by cussin' to hisself. Jist now Marse Erskine went tearin' by de landin' wid a couple o' swords under his arm." His eyes too went to the wall. "Yes, bless Gawd, dey's gone!" Barbara flew out the door.

In a few moments she had found Harry and Hugh. Even while their horses were being saddled her father rode up.

"It's murder," cried Harry, "and Grey knows it. Erskine knows nothing about a rapier."

Without a word Colonel Dale wheeled his tired horse and soon Harry and Hugh dashed after him. Barbara walked back to the

house, wringing her hands, but on the porch she sat quietly in the agony of waiting that was the rôle of women in those days.

Meanwhile, at a swift gallop Firefly was skimming along the river road. Grey had kept his word and more: he had not only ridden slowly but he had stopped and was waiting at an oak-tree that was a corner-stone between two plantations.

"That I may not kill you on your own land," he said.

Erskine started. "The consideration is deeper than you know."

They hitched their horses, and Erskine followed into a pleasant glade—a grassy glade through which murmured a little stream. Erskine dropped the rapiers on the sward.

"Take your choice," he said.

"There is none," said Grey, picking up the one nearer to him. "I know them both." Grey took off his coat while Erskine waited. Grey made the usual moves of courtesy and still Erskine waited, wonderingly, with the point of the rapier on the ground.

"When you are ready," he said, "will you please let me know?"

"Ready!" answered Grey, and he lunged forward. Erskine merely whipped at his blade so that the clang of it whined on the air to the breaking-point and sprang backward. He was as quick as an eyelash and lithe as a panther, and yet Grey almost laughed aloud. All Erskine did was to whip the thrusting blade aside and leap out of danger like a flash of light. It was like an inexpert boxer flailing according to rules unknown—and Grey's face flamed and actually turned anxious. Then, as a kindly fate would have it, Erskine's blade caught in Grey's guard by accident, and the powerful wrist behind it seeking merely to wrench the weapon loose tore Grey's rapier from his grasp and hurled it ten feet away. There is no greater humiliation for the expert swordsman, and not for nothing had Erskine suffered the shame of that long-ago day when a primitive instinct had led him to thrusting his knife into this same enemy's breast. Now, with his sword's point on the earth, he waited courteously for Grey to recover his weapon.

Again a kindly fate intervened. Even

as Grey rushed for his sword, Erskine heard the beat of horses' hoofs. As he snatched it from the ground and turned, with a wicked smile over his grinding teeth, came Harry's shout, and as he rushed for Erskine, Colonel Dale swung from his horse. The sword-blades clashed, Erskine whipping back and forth in a way to make a swordsman groan—and Colonel Dale had Erskine by the wrist and was between them.

"How dare you, sir?" cried Grey hotly.

"Just a moment, young gentleman," said Colonel Dale calmly.

"Let us alone, Uncle Harry—I——"

"Just a moment," repeated the colonel sternly. "Mr. Grey, do you think it quite fair that you with your skill should fight a man who knows nothing about foils?"

"There was no other way," Grey said sullenly.

"And you could not wait, I presume?" Grey did not answer.

"Now, hear what I have to say, and if you both do not agree, the matter will be arranged to your entire satisfaction, Mr. Grey. I have but one question to ask. Your country is at war. She needs every man for her defense.

The sword blades clashed, Erskine whipping back and forth in a way to make a swordsman groan

Do you not both think your lives belong to your country and that it is selfish and unpatriotic just now to risk them in any other cause?" He waited for his meaning to sink in, and sink it did.

"Colonel Dale, your nephew grossly insulted me, and your daughter showed me the door. I made no defense to him nor to her, but I will to you. I merely repeated what I had been told and I believed it true. Now that I hear it is not true, I agree with you, sir, and I am willing to express my regrets and apologies."

"That is better," said Colonel Dale heartily, and he turned to Erskine, but Erskine was crying hotly:

"And I express neither."

"Very well," sneered Grey coldly. "Perhaps we may meet when your relatives are not present to protect you."

"Uncle Harry—" Erskine implored, but Grey was turning toward his horse.

"After all, Colonel Dale is right."

"Yes," assented Erskine helplessly, and then—"it is possible that we shall not always be on the same side."

"So I thought," returned Grey with lifted

eyebrows, "when I heard what I did about you!" Both Harry and Hugh had to catch Erskine by an arm then, and they led him struggling away. Grey mounted his horse, lifted his hat, and was gone. Colonel Dale picked up the swords.

"Now," he said, "enough of all this—let it be forgotten."

And he laughed.

"You'll have to confess, Erskine—he has a quick tongue and you must think only of his temptation to use it."

Erskine did not answer.

As they rode back Colonel Dale spoke of the war. It was about to move into Virginia, he said, and when it did— Both Harry and Hugh interrupted him with a glad shout:

"We can go!" Colonel Dale nodded sadly.

Suddenly all pulled their horses in simultaneously and raised their eyes, for all heard the coming of a horse in a dead run. Around a thicketed curve of the road came Barbara, with her face white and her hair streaming behind her. She pulled her pony in but a few feet in front of them, with her burning eyes on Erskine alone.

"Have you killed him—have you killed him? If you have—" She stopped helpless, and all were so amazed that none could answer. Erskine shook his head. There was a flash of relief in the girl's white face, its recklessness gave way to sudden shame, and, without a word, she wheeled and was away again—Harry flying after her. No one spoke. Colonel Dale looked aghast and Erskine's heart again turned sick.

XVIII

The sun was close to the uneven sweep of the wilderness. Through its slanting rays the river poured like a flood of gold. The negroes were on the way singing from the fields. Cries, chaffing, and the musical clanking of trace-chains came from the barnyard. Hungry cattle were lowing and full-uddered mothers were mooing answers to bawling calves. A peacock screamed from a distant tree and sailed forth, full-spread—a great gleaming winged jewel of the air. In crises the nerves tighten like violin strings, the memory-plates turn abnormally sensitive—and Erskine was not to forget that hour.

The house was still and not a soul was in sight as the three, still silent, walked up the great path. When they were near the portico Harry came out. He looked worried and anxious.

"Where's Barbara?" asked her father.

"Locked in her room."

"Let her alone," said Colonel Dale gently.

Like brother and cousin, Harry and Hugh were merely irritated by the late revelation, but the father was shocked that his child was no longer a child. Erskine remembered the girl as she waited for Grey's coming at the sun-dial, her face as she walked with him up the path. For a moment the two boys stood in moody silence. Harry took the rapiers in and put them in their place on the wall. Hugh quietly disappeared. Erskine, with a word of apology, went to his room, and Colonel Dale sat down on the porch alone.

As the dusk gathered, Erskine, looking gloomily through his window, saw the girl flutter like a white moth past the box-hedge and down the path. A moment later he saw the tall form of Colonel Dale follow her—and both passed from sight. On the thick turf the colonel's feet too were noiseless, and when Barbara stopped at the sun-dial he too paused. Her hands were caught tight and her drawn young face was lifted to the yellow disk just rising from the far forest gloom. She was unhappy, and the colonel's heart ached sorely, for any unhappiness of hers always trebled his own.

"Little girl!" he called, and no lover's voice could have been more gentle. "Come here!"

She turned and saw him, with arms outstretched, the low moon lighting all the tenderness in his fine old face, and she flew to him and fell to weeping on his breast. In wise silence he stroked her hair until she grew a little calmer.

"What's the matter, little daughter?"

"I—I—don't know."

"I understand. You were quite right to send him away, but you did not want him harmed."

"I—I—didn't want anybody harmed."

"I know. It's too bad, but none of us seem quite to trust him."

"That's it," she sobbed; "I don't either, and yet——"

"I know. I know. My little girl must be wise and brave, and maybe it will all pass and she will be glad. But she must be brave. Mother is not well and she must not be made unhappy too. She must not know. Can't my little girl come back to the house now? She must be hostess and this is Erskine's last

night." She looked up, brushing away her tears.

"His last night?" Ah, wise old colonel!

"Yes—he goes to-morrow to join Captain Clark at Williamsburg on his foolish campaign in the Northwest. We might never see him again."

"Oh, father!"

"Well, it isn't that bad, but my little girl must be very nice to him. He seems to be very unhappy, too."

Barbara looked thoughtful, but there was no pretense of not understanding.

"I'm sorry," she said. She took her father's arm, and when they reached the steps Erskine saw her smiling. And smiling, almost gay, she was at supper, sitting with exquisite dignity in her mother's place. Harry and Hugh looked amazed, and her father, who knew the bit of tempered steel she was, smiled his encouragement proudly. Of Erskine, who sat at her right, she asked many questions about the coming campaign. Captain Clark had said he would go with a hundred men if he could get no more. The rallying-point would be the fort in Kentucky

where he had first come back to his own people, and Dave Yandell would be captain of a company. He himself was going as guide, though he hoped to act as soldier as well. Perhaps they might bring back the Hair-Buyer, General Hamilton, a prisoner to Williamsburg, and then he would join Harry and Hugh in the militia if the war came south and Virginia were invaded, as some prophesied, by Tarleton's White Rangers, who had been ravaging the Carolinas. After supper the little lady excused herself with a smiling courtesy to go to her mother, and Erskine found himself in the moonlight on the big portico with Colonel Dale alone.

"Erskine," he said, "you make it very difficult for me to keep your secret. Hugh alone seems to suspect—he must have got the idea from Grey, but I have warned him to say nothing. The others seem not to have thought of the matter at all. It was a boyish impulse of generosity which you may regret——"

"Never," interrupted the boy. "I have no use—less than ever now."

"Nevertheless," the colonel went on, "I

regard myself as merely your steward, and I must tell you one thing. Mr. Jefferson, as you know, is always at open war with people like us. His hand is against coach and four, silver plate, and aristocrat. He is fighting now against the law that gives property to the eldest son, and he will pass the bill. His argument is rather amusing. He says if you will show him that the eldest son eats more, wears more, and does more work than his brothers, he will grant that that son is entitled to more. He wants to blot out all distinctions of class. He can't do that, but he will pass this bill."

"I hope he will," muttered Erskine.

"Barbara would not accept your sacrifice nor would any of us, and it is only fair that I should warn you that some day, if you should change your mind, and I were no longer living, you might be too late."

"Please don't, Uncle Harry. It is done—done. Of course, it wasn't fair for me to consider Barbara alone, but she will be fair and you understand. I wish you would regard the whole matter as though I didn't exist."

"I can't do that, my boy. I am your steward and when you want anything you have only to let me know!" Erskine shook his head.

"I don't want anything—I need very little, and when I'm in the woods, as I expect to be most of the time, I need nothing at all." Colonel Dale rose.

"I wish you would go to college at Williamsburg for a year or two to better fit yourself—in case——"

"I'd like to go—to learn to fence," smiled the boy, and the colonel smiled too.

"You'll certainly need to know that, if you are going to be as reckless as you were today." Erskine's eyes darkened.

"Uncle Harry, you may think me foolish, but I don't like or trust Grey. What was he doing with those British traders out in the Northwest?—he was not buying furs. It's absurd. Why was he hand in glove with Lord Dunmore?"

"Lord Dunmore had a daughter," was the dry reply, and Erskine flung out a gesture that made words unnecessary. Colonel Dale crossed the porch and put his hand on the lad's shoulders.

"Erskine," he said, "don't worry—and—don't give up hope. Be patient, wait, come back to us. Go to William and Mary. Fit yourself to be one of us in all ways. Then everything may yet come out in the only way that would be fitting and right." The boy blushed, and the colonel went on earnestly:

"I can think of nothing in the world that would make me quite so happy."

"It's no use," the boy said tremblingly, "but I'll never forget what you have just said as long as I live, and, no matter what becomes of me, I'll love Barbara as long as I live. But, even if things were otherwise, I'd never risk making her unhappy even by trying. I'm not fit for her nor for this life. I'll never forget the goodness of all of you to me—I can't explain—but I can't get over my life in the woods and among the Indians. Why, but for all of you I might have gone back to them—I would yet. I can't explain, but I get choked and I can't breathe—such a longing for the woods comes over me and I can't help me. I must *go*—and nothing can hold me."

"Your father was that way," said Colonel

Dale sadly. "You may get over it, but he never did. And it must be harder for you because of your early associations. Blow out the lights in the hall. You needn't bolt the door. Good night, and God bless you." And the kindly gentleman was gone.

Erskine sat where he was. The house was still and there were no noises from the horses and cattle in the barn—none from roosting peacock, turkey, and hen. From the far-away quarters came faintly the merry, mellow notes of a fiddle, and farther still the song of some courting negro returning home. A drowsy bird twittered in an ancient elm at the corner of the house. The flowers drooped in the moonlight which bathed the great path, streamed across the great river, and on up to its source in the great yellow disk floating in majestic serenity high in the cloudless sky. And that path, those flowers, that house, the barn, the cattle, sheep, and hogs, those grain-fields and grassy acres, even those singing black folk, were all—all his if he but said the words. The thought was no temptation—it was a mighty wonder that such a thing could be. And that was

all it was—a wonder—to him, but to them it was the world. Without it all, what would they do? Perhaps Mr. Jefferson might soon solve the problem for him. Perhaps he might not return from that wild campaign against the British and the Indians—he might get killed. And then a thought gripped him and held him fast—*he need not come back*. That mighty wilderness beyond the mountains was his real home—out there was his real life. He need not come back, and they would never know. Then came a thought that almost made him groan. There was a light step in the hall, and Barbara came swiftly out and dropped on the topmost step with her chin in both hands. Almost at once she seemed to feel his presence, for she turned her head quickly.

"Erskine!" As quickly he rose, embarrassed beyond speech.

"Come here! Why, you look guilty—what have you been thinking?" He was startled by her intuition, but he recovered himself swiftly.

"I suppose I will always feel guilty if I have made you unhappy."

"You haven't made me unhappy. I don't know what you have made me. Papa says a girl does not understand and no man can, but he does better than anybody. You saw how I felt if you had killed him, but you don't know how I would have felt if he had killed you. I don't myself."

She began patting her hands gently and helplessly together, and again she dropped her chin into them with her eyes lifted to the moon.

"I shall be very unhappy when you are gone. I wish you were not going, but I know that you are—you can't help it." Again he was startled.

"Whenever you look at that moon over in that dark wilderness, I wish you would please think of your little cousin—will you?" She turned eagerly and he was too moved to speak—he only bowed his head as for a prayer or a benediction.

"You don't know how often our thoughts will cross, and that will be a great comfort to me. Sometimes I am afraid. There is a wild strain on my mother's side, and it is in me. Papa knows it and he is wise—so wise

—I am afraid I may sometimes do something very foolish, and it won't be *me* at all. It will be somebody that died long ago." She put both her hands over both his and held them tight.

"I never, never distrusted you. I trust you more than anybody else in the whole world except my father, and he might be away or"—she gave a little sob—"he might get killed. I want you to make me a promise."

"Anything," said the boy huskily.

"I want you to promise me that, no matter when, no matter where you are, if I need you and send for you you will come." And Indian-like he put his forehead on both her little hands.

"Thank you. I must go now." Bewildered and dazed, the boy rose and awkwardly put out his hand.

"Kiss me good-by." She put her arms about his neck, and for the first time in his life the boy's lips met a woman's. For a moment she put her face against his and at his ear was a whisper.

"Good-by, Erskine!" And she was gone

—swiftly—leaving the boy in a dizzy world of falling stars through which a white light leaped to heights his soul had never dreamed.

XIX

With the head of that column of stalwart backwoodsmen went Dave Yandell and Erskine Dale. A hunting-party of four Shawnees heard their coming through the woods, and, lying like snakes in the undergrowth, peered out and saw them pass. Then they rose, and Crooked Lightning looked at Black Wolf and, with a grunt of angry satisfaction, led the way homeward. And to the village they bore the news that White Arrow had made good his word and, side by side with the big chief of the Long Knives, was leading a war-party against his tribe and kinsmen. And Early Morn carried the news to her mother, who lay sick in a wigwam.

The miracle went swiftly, and Kaskaskia fell. Stealthily a cordon of hunters surrounded the little town. The rest stole to the walls of the fort. Lights flickered from within, the sounds of violins and dancing feet came through crevice and window. Clark's tall figure stole noiselessly into the

great hall, where the Creoles were making merry and leaned silently with folded arms against the doorpost, looking on at the revels with a grave smile. The light from the torches flickered across his face, and an Indian lying on the floor sprang to his feet with a curdling war-whoop. Women screamed and men rushed toward the door. The stranger stood motionless and his grim smile was unchanged.

"Dance on!" he commanded courteously, "but remember," he added sternly, "you dance under Virginia and not Great Britain!"

There was a great noise behind him. Men dashed into the fort, and Rocheblave and his officers were prisoners. By daylight Clark had the town disarmed. The French, Clark said next day, could take the oath of allegiance to the Republic, or depart with their families in peace. As for their church, he had nothing to do with any church save to protect it from insult. So that the people who had heard terrible stories of the wild woodsmen and who expected to be killed or made slaves, joyfully became Americans. They even gave Clark a volunteer company

to march with him upon Cahokia, and that village, too, soon became American. Father Gibault volunteered to go to Vincennes. Vincennes gathered in the church to hear him, and then flung the Stars and Stripes to the winds of freedom above the fort. Clark sent one captain there to take command. With a handful of hardy men who could have been controlled only by him, the dauntless one had conquered a land as big as any European kingdom. Now he had to govern and protect it. He had to keep loyal an alien race and hold his own against the British and numerous tribes of Indians, bloodthirsty, treacherous, and deeply embittered against all Americans. He was hundreds of miles from any American troops; farther still from the seat of government, and could get no advice or help for perhaps a year.

And those Indians poured into Cahokia —a horde of them from every tribe between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi—chiefs and warriors of every importance; but not before Clark had formed and drilled four companies of volunteer Creoles.

"Watch him!" said Dave, and Erskine did,

marvelling at the man's knowledge of the Indian. He did not live in the fort, but always on guard, always seemingly confident, stayed openly in town while the savages, sullen and grotesque, strutted in full war panoply through the straggling streets, inquisitive and insolent, their eyes burning with the lust of plunder and murder. For days he sat in the midst of the ringed warriors and listened. On the second day Erskine saw Kahtoo in the throng and Crooked Lightning and Black Wolf. After dusk that day he felt the fringe of his hunting-shirt plucked, and an Indian, with face hidden in a blanket, whispered as he passed.

"Tell the big chief," he said in Shawnee, "to be on guard to-morrow night." He knew it was some kindly tribesman, and he wheeled and went to Clark, who smiled. Already the big chief had guards concealed in his little house, who seized the attacking Indians, while two minutes later the townspeople were under arms. The captives were put in irons, and Erskine saw among them the crestfallen faces of Black Wolf and Crooked Lightning. The Indians pleaded that they were trying to

test the friendship of the French for Clark, but Clark, refusing all requests for their release, remained silent, haughty, indifferent, fearless. He still refused to take refuge in the fort, and called in a number of ladies and gentlemen to his house, where they danced all night amid the council-fires of the bewildered savages. Next morning he stood in the centre of their ringed warriors with the tasselled shirts of his riflemen massed behind him, released the captive chiefs, and handed them the bloody war belt of wampum.

"I scorn your hostility and treachery. You deserve death but you shall leave in safety. In three days I shall begin war on you. If you Indians do not want your women and children killed—stop killing ours. We shall see who can make that war belt the most bloody. While you have been in my camp you have had food and fire-water, but now that I have finished, you must depart speedily."

The captive chief spoke and so did old Kahtoo, with his eyes fixed sadly but proudly on his adopted son. They had listened to bad birds and been led astray by the British

—henceforth they would be friendly with the Americans. But Clark was not satisfied.

"I come as a warrior," he said haughtily; "I shall be a friend to the friendly. If you choose war I shall send so many warriors from the Thirteen Council-Fires that your land shall be darkened and you shall hear no sounds but that of the birds who live on blood." And then he handed forth two belts of peace and war, and they eagerly took the belt of peace. The treaty followed next day and Clark insisted that two of the prisoners should be put to death; and as the two selected came forward Erskine saw Black Wolf was one. He whispered with Clark and Kahtoo, and Crooked Lightning saw the big chief with his hand on Erskine's shoulder and heard him forgive the two and tell them to depart. And thus peace was won.

Straightway old Kahtoo pushed through the warriors and, plucking the big chief by the sleeve, pointed to Erskine.

"That is my son," he said, "and I want him to go home with me."

"He shall go," said Clark quickly, "but he shall return, whenever it pleases him, to me."

And so Erskine went forth one morning at dawn, and his coming into the Shawnee camp was like the coming of a king. Early Morn greeted him with glowing eyes, his foster-mother brought him food, looking proudly upon him, and old Kahtoo harangued his braves around the council-pole, while the prophet and Crooked Lightning sulked in their tents.

"My son spoke words of truth," he proclaimed sonorously. "He warned us against the king over the waters and told us to make friends with the Americans. We did not heed his words, and so he brought the great chief of the Long Knives, who stood without fear among warriors more numerous than leaves and spoke the same words to all. We are friends of the Long Knives. My son is the true prophet. Bring out the false one and Crooked Lightning and Black Wolf, whose life my son saved though the two were enemies. My son shall do with them as he pleases."

Many young braves sprang willingly forward and the three were haled before Erskine. Old Kahtoo waved his hand toward them and

sat down. Erskine rose and fixed his eyes sternly on the cowering prophet:

"He shall go forth from the village and shall never return. For his words work mischief, he does foolish things, and his drumming frightens the game. He is a false prophet and he must go." He turned to Crooked Lightning:

"The Indians have made peace with the Long Knives and White Arrow would make peace with any Indian, though an enemy. Crooked Lightning shall go or stay, as he pleases. Black Wolf shall stay, for the tribe will need him as a hunter and a warrior against the English foes of the Long Knives. White Arrow does not ask another to spare an enemy's life and then take it away himself."

The braves grunted approval. Black Wolf and Crooked Lightning averted their faces and the prophet shambled uneasily away. Again old Kahtoo proclaimed sonorously, "It is well!" and went back with Erskine to his tent. There he sank wearily on a buffalo-skin and plead with the boy to stay with them as chief in his stead. He was very old, and

now that peace was made with the Long Knives he was willing to die. If Erskine would but give his promise, he would never rise again from where he lay.

Erskine shook his head and the old man sorrowfully turned his face.

XX

And yet Erskine lingered on and on at the village. Of the white woman he had learned little other than that she had been bought from another tribe and adopted by old Kahtoo; but it was plain that since the threatened burning of her she had been held in high respect by the whole tribe. He began to wonder about her and whether she might not wish to go back to her own people. He had never talked with her, but he never moved about the camp that he did not feel her eyes upon him. And Early Morn's big soft eyes, too, never seemed to leave him. She brought him food, she sat at the door of his tent, she followed him about the village and bore herself openly as his slave. At last old Kahtoo, who would not give up his great hope, plead with him to marry her, and while he was talking the girl stood at the door of the tent and interrupted them. Her mother's eyes were growing dim, she said. Her mother wanted to talk with White Ar-

row and look upon his face before her sight should altogether pass. Nor could Erskine know that the white woman wanted to look into the eyes of the man she hoped would become her daughter's husband, but Kahtoo did, and he bade Erskine go. His foster-mother, coming upon the scene, scowled, but Erskine rose and went to the white woman's tent. She sat just inside the opening, with a blanket across the lower half of her face, nor did she look at him. Instead she plied him with questions, and listened eagerly to his every word, and drew from him every detail of his life as far back as he could remember. Poor soul, it was the first opportunity for many years that she had had to talk with any white person who had been in the Eastern world, and freely and frankly he held nothing back. She had drawn her blanket close across her face while he was telling of his capture by the Indians and his life among them, his escape and the death of his father, and she was crying when he finished. He even told her a little of Barbara, and when in turn he questioned her, she told little, and his own native delicacy made him understand. She,

too, had been captured with a son who would have been about Erskine's age, but her boy and her husband had been killed. She had been made a slave and—now she drew the blanket across her eyes—after the birth of her daughter she felt she could never go back to her own people. Then her Indian husband had been killed and old Kahtoo had bought and adopted her, and she had not been forced to marry again. Now it was too late to leave the Indians. She loved her daughter; she would not subject her or herself to humiliation among the whites, and, anyhow, there was no one to whom she could go. And Erskine read deep into the woman's heart and his own was made sad. Her concern was with her daughter—what would become of her? Many a young brave, besides Black Wolf, had put his heart at her little feet, but she would have none of them. And so Erskine was the heaven-sent answer to the mother's prayers—that was the thought behind her mournful eyes.

All the while the girl had crouched near, looking at Erskine with doglike eyes, and when he rose to go the woman dropped the

blanket from her face and got to her feet. Shyly she lifted her hands, took his face between them, bent close, and studied it searchingly:

"What is your name?"

"Erskine Dale."

Without a word she turned back into her tent.

At dusk Erskine stood by the river's brim, with his eyes lifted to a rising moon and his thoughts with Barbara on the bank of the James. Behind him he heard a rustle and, turning, he saw the girl, her breast throbbing and her eyes burning with a light he had never seen before.

"Black Wolf will kill you," she whispered. "Black Wolf wants Early Morn and he knows that Early Morn wants White Arrow." Erskine put both hands on her shoulders and looked down into her eyes. She trembled, and when his arms went about her she surged closer to him and the touch of her warm, supple body went through him like fire. And then with a triumphant smile she sprang back.

"Black Wolf will see," she whispered, and fled. Erskine sank to the ground, with his

head in his hands. The girl ran back to her tent, and the mother, peering at the flushed face and shining eyes, clove to the truth. She said nothing, but when the girl was asleep and faintly smiling, the white woman sat staring out into the moonlit woods, softly beating her breast.

XXI

Erskine had given Black Wolf his life, and the young brave had accepted the debt and fretted under it sorely. Erskine knew it, and all his kindness had been of little avail, for Black Wolf sulked sullenly by the fire or at his wigwam door. And when Erskine had begun to show some heed to Early Morn a fierce jealousy seized the savage, and his old hatred was reborn a thousandfold more strong —and that, too, Erskine now knew. Meat ran low and a hunting-party went abroad. Game was scarce and only after the second day was there a kill. Erskine had sighted a huge buck, had fired quickly and at close range. Wounded, the buck had charged, Erskine's knife was twisted in his belt, and the buck was upon him before he could get it out. He tried to dart for a tree, stumbled, turned, and caught the infuriated beast by the horns. He uttered no cry, but the angry bellow of the stag reached the ears of Black Wolf through the woods, and he darted

toward the sound. And he came none too soon. Erskine heard the crack of a rifle, the stag toppled over, and he saw Black Wolf standing over him with a curiously triumphant look on his saturnine face. In Erskine, when he rose, the white man was predominant, and he thrust out his hand, but Black Wolf ignored it.

"White Arrow gave Black Wolf his life. The debt is paid."

Erskine looked at his enemy, nodded, and the two bore the stag away.

Instantly a marked change was plain in Black Wolf. He told the story of the fight with the buck to all. Boldly he threw off the mantle of shame, stalked haughtily through the village, and went back to open enmity with Erskine. At dusk a day or two later, when he was coming down the path from the white woman's wigwam, Black Wolf confronted him, scowling.

"Early Morn shall belong to Black Wolf," he said insolently. Erskine met his baleful, half-drunken eyes scornfully.

"We will leave that to Early Morn," he said coolly, and then thundered suddenly:

"Out of my way!"

Black Wolf hesitated and gave way, but ever thereafter Erskine was on guard.

In the white woman, too, Erskine now saw a change. Once she had encouraged him to stay with the Indians; now she lost no opportunity to urge against it. She had heard that Hamilton would try to retake Vincennes, that he was forming a great force with which to march south, sweep through Kentucky, batter down the wooden forts, and force the Kentuckians behind the great mountain wall. Erskine would be needed by the whites, who would never understand or trust him if he should stay with the Indians. All this she spoke one day when Erskine came to her tent to talk. Her face had blanched, she had argued passionately that he must go, and Erskine was sorely puzzled. The girl, too, had grown rebellious and disobedient, for the change in her mother was plain also to her, and she could not understand. Moreover, Erskine's stubbornness grew, and he began to flame within at the stalking insolence of Black Wolf, who slipped through the shadows of day and the dusk to spy on the two where-

ever they came together. And one day when the sun was midway, and in the open of the village, the clash came. Black Wolf darted forth from his wigwam, his eyes bloodshot with rage and drink, and his hunting-knife in his hand. A cry from Early Morn warned Erskine and he wheeled. As Black Wolf made a vicious slash at him he sprang aside, and with his fist caught the savage in the jaw. Black Wolf fell heavily and Erskine was upon him with his own knife at his enemy's throat.

"Stop them!" old Kahtoo cried sternly, but it was the terrified shriek of the white woman that stayed Erskine's hand. Two young braves disarmed the fallen Indian, and Kahtoo looked inquiringly at his adopted son.

"Turn him loose!" Erskine scorned. "I have no fear of him. He is a woman and drunk, but next time I shall kill him."

The white woman had run down, caught Early Morn, and was leading her back to her tent. From inside presently came low, passionate pleading from the woman and an occasional sob from the girl. And when an hour later, at dusk, Erskine turned upward toward the tent, the girl gave a horrified

cry, flashed from the tent, and darted for the high cliff over the river.

"Catch her!" cried the mother. "Quick!" Erskine fled after her, overtook her with her hands upraised for the plunge on the very edge of the cliff, and half carried her, struggling and sobbing, back to the tent. Within the girl dropped in a weeping heap, and with her face covered, and the woman turned to Erskine, agonized.

"I told her," she whispered, "and she was going to kill herself. You are my son!"

Still sleepless at dawn, the boy rode Firefly into the woods. At sunset he came in, gaunt with brooding and hunger. His foster-mother brought him food, but he would not touch it. The Indian woman stared at him with keen suspicion, and presently old Kahtoo, passing slowly, bent on him the same look, but asked no question. Erskine gave no heed to either, but his mother, watching from her wigwam, understood and grew fearful. Quickly she stepped outside and called him, and he rose and went to her bewildered; she was smiling.

"They are watching," she said, and Erskine, too, understood, and kept his back toward the watchers.

"I have decided," he said. "You and *she* must leave here and go with me."

His mother pretended much displeasure. "She will not leave, and I will not leave her"—her lips trembled—"and I would have gone long ago but——"

"I understand," interrupted Erskine, "but you will go now with your son."

The poor woman had to scowl.

"No, and you must not tell them. They will never let me go, and they will use me to keep you here. *You* must go at once. She will never leave this tent as long as you are here, and if you stay she will die, or kill herself. Some day—" She turned abruptly and went back into her tent. Erskine wheeled and went to old Kahtoo.

"You want Early Morn?" asked the old man. "You shall have her."

"No," said the boy, "I am going back to the big chief."

"You are my son and I am old and weak."

"I am a soldier and must obey the big chief's commands, as must you."

"I shall live," said the old man wearily, "until you come again."

Erskine nodded and went for his horse. Black Wolf watched him with malignant satisfaction, but said nothing — nor did Crooked Lightning. Erskine turned once as he rode away. His mother was standing outside her wigwam. Mournfully she waved her hand. Behind her and within the tent he could see Early Morn with both hands at her breast.

XXII

Dawned 1781.

The war was coming into Virginia at last. Virginia falling would thrust a great wedge through the centre of the Confederacy, feed the British armies and end the fight. Cornwallis was to drive the wedge, and never had the opening seemed easier. Virginia was drained of her fighting men, and south of the mountains was protected only by a militia, for the most part, of old men and boys. North and South ran despair. The soldiers had no pay, little food, and only old worn-out coats, tattered linen overalls, and one blanket between three men, to protect them from drifting snow and icy wind. Even the great Washington was near despair, and in foreign help his sole hope lay. Already the traitor, Arnold, had taken Richmond, burned warehouses, and returned, but little harassed, to Portsmouth.

In April, "the proudest man," as Mr. Jef-

ferson said, "of the proudest nation on earth," one General Phillips, marching northward, paused opposite Richmond, and looked with amaze at the troop-crowned hills north of the river. Up there was a beardless French youth of twenty-three, with the epaulets of a major-general.

"He will not cross—hein?" said the Marquis de Lafayette. "Very well!" And they had a race for Petersburg, which the Britisher reached first, and straightway fell ill of a fever at "Bollingbrook." A cannonade from the Appomattox hills saluted him.

"They will not let me die in peace," said General Phillips, but he passed, let us hope, to it, and Benedict Arnold succeeded him.

Cornwallis was coming on. Tarleton's white rangers were bedevilling the land, and it was at this time that Erskine Dale once more rode Firefly to the river James.

The boy had been two years in the wilds. When he left the Shawnee camp winter was setting in, that terrible winter of '79—of deep snow and hunger and cold. When he reached Kaskaskia, Captain Clark had gone to Kentucky, and Erskine found bad news.

Hamilton and Hay had taken Vincennes. There Captain Helm's Creoles, as soon as they saw the redcoats, slipped away from him to surrender their arms to the British, and thus deserted by all, he and the two or three Americans with him had to give up the fort. The French reswore allegiance to Britain. Hamilton confiscated their liquor and broke up their billiard-tables. He let his Indians scatter to their villages, and with his regulars, volunteers, white Indian leaders, and red auxiliaries went into winter quarters. One band of Shawnees he sent to Ohio to scout and take scalps in the settlements. In the spring he would sweep Kentucky and destroy all the settlements west of the Alleghánies. So Erskine and Dave went for Clark; and that trip neither ever forgot. Storms had followed each other since late November and the snow lay deep. Cattle and horses perished, deer and elk were found dead in the woods, and buffalo came at nightfall to old Jerome Sanders's fort for food and companionship with his starving herd. Corn gave out and no johnny-cakes were baked on long boards in front of the fire. There was

no salt or vegetable food; nothing but the flesh of lean wild game. The only fat was with the bears in the hollows of trees, and every hunter was searching hollow trees. The breast of the wild turkey served for bread. Yet, while the frontiersmen remained crowded in the stockades and the men hunted and the women made clothes of tanned deer-hides, buffalo-wool cloth, and nettle-bark linen, and both hollowed "noggins" out of the knot of a tree, Clark made his amazing march to Vincennes, recaptured it by the end of February, and sent Hamilton to Williamsburg a prisoner. Erskine plead to be allowed to take him there, but Clark would not let him go. Permanent garrisons were placed at Vincennes and Cahokia, and at Kaskaskia. Erskine stayed to help make peace with the Indians, punish marauders and hunting bands, so that by the end of the year Clark might sit at the Falls of the Ohio as a shield for the west and a sure guarantee that the whites would never be forced to abandon wild Kentucky.

The two years in the wilderness had left their mark on Erskine. He was tall, lean, swarthy, gaunt, and yet he was not all woods-

man, for his born inheritance as gentleman had been more than emphasized by his association with Clark and certain Creole officers in the Northwest, who had improved his French and gratified one pet wish of his life since his last visit to the James—they had taught him to fence. His mother he had not seen again, but he had learned that she was alive and not yet blind. Of Early Morn he had heard nothing at all. Once a traveller had brought word of Dane Grey. Grey was in Philadelphia and prominent in the gay doings of that city. He had taken part in a brilliant pageant called the "Mischianza," which was staged by André, and was reported a close friend of that ill-fated young gentleman.

After the fight at Piqua, with Clark Erskine put forth for old Jerome Sanders's fort. He found the hard days of want over. There was not only corn in plenty but wheat, potatoes, pumpkins, turnips, melons. They tapped maple-trees for sugar and had sown flax. Game was plentiful, and cattle, horses, and hogs had multiplied on cane and buffalo clover. Indeed, it was a comparatively peace-

ful fall, and though Clark plead with him, Erskine stubbornly set his face for Virginia.

Honor Sanders and Polly Conrad had married, but Lydia Noe was still firm against the wooing of every young woodsman who came to the fort; and when Erskine bade her goodby and she told him to carry her love to Dave Yandell, he knew for whom she would wait forever if need be.

There were many, many travellers on the Wilderness Road now, and Colonel Dale's prophecy was coming true. The settlers were pouring in and the long, long trail was now no lonesome way.

At Williamsburg Erskine learned many things. Colonel Dale, now a general, was still with Washington and Harry was with him. Hugh was with the Virginia militia and Dave with Lafayette.

Tarleton's legion of rangers in their white uniforms were scourging Virginia as they had scourged the Carolinas. Through the James River country they had gone with fire and sword, burning houses, carrying off horses, destroying crops, burning grain in the mills, laying plantations to waste. Barbara's

mother was dead. Her neighbors had moved to safety, but Barbara, he heard, still lived with old Mammy and Ephraim at Red Oaks, unless that, too, had been recently put to the torch. Where, then, would he find her?

XXIII

Down the river Erskine rode with a sad heart. At the place where he had fought with Grey he pulled Firefly to a sudden halt. There was the boundary of Red Oaks and there started a desolation that ran as far as his eye could reach. Red Oaks had not been spared, and he put Firefly to a fast gallop, with eyes strained far ahead and his heart beating with agonized foreboding and savage rage. Soon over a distant clump of trees he could see the chimneys of Barbara's home—his home, he thought helplessly—and perhaps those chimneys were all that was left. And then he saw the roof and the upper windows and the cap of the big columns unharmed, untouched, and he pulled Firefly in again, with overwhelming relief, and wondered at the miracle. Again he started and again pulled in when he caught sight of three horses hitched near the stiles. Turning quickly from the road, he hid Firefly in the underbrush. Very quietly he slipped

along the path by the river, and, pushing aside through the rose-bushes, lay down where unseen he could peer through the closely matted hedge. He had not long to wait. A white uniform issued from the great hall door and another and another—and after them Barbara—smiling. The boy's blood ran hot—smiling at her enemies. Two officers bowed, Barbara courtesied, and they wheeled on their heels and descended the steps. The third stayed behind a moment, bowed over her hand and kissed it. The watcher's blood turned then to liquid fire. Great God, at what price was that noble old house left standing? Grimly, swiftly Erskine turned, sliding through the bushes like a snake to the edge of the road along which they must pass. He would fight the three, for his life was worth nothing now. He heard them laughing, talking at the stiles. He heard them speak Barbara's name, and two seemed to be bantering the third, whose answering laugh seemed acquiescent and triumphant. They were coming now. The boy had his pistols out, primed and cocked. He was rising on his knees, just about to

leap to his feet and out into the road, when he fell back into a startled, paralyzed, inactive heap. Glimpsed through an opening in the bushes, the leading trooper in the uniform of Tarleton's legion was none other than Dane Grey, and Erskine's brain had worked quicker than his angry heart. This was a mystery that must be solved before his pistols spoke. He rose crouching as the troopers rode away. At the bend of the road he saw Grey turn with a gallant sweep of his tricornered hat, and, swerving his head cautiously, he saw Barbara answer with a wave of her handkerchief. If Tarleton's men were around he would better leave Firefly where he was in the woods for a while. A jay-bird gave out a flutelike note above his head; Erskine never saw a jay-bird perched cockily on a branch that he did not think of Grey; but Grey was brave—so, too, was a jay-bird. A startled gasp behind him made him wheel, pistol once more in hand, to find a negro, mouth wide open and staring at him from the road.

"Marse Erskine!" he gasped. It was Ephraim, the boy who had led Barbara's

white ponies out long, long ago, now a tall, muscular lad with an ebony face and dazzling teeth. "Whut you doin' hyeh, suh? Whar' yo' hoss? Gawd, I'se sutn'ly glad to see yuh." Erskine pointed to an oak.

"Right by that tree. Put him in the stable and feed him."

The negro shook his head.

"No, suh. I'll take de feed down to him. Too many redcoats messin' round heah. You bettah go in de back way—dey might see yuh."

"How is Miss Barbara?"

The negro's eyes shifted.

"She's well. Yassuh, she's well as common."

"Wasn't one of those soldiers who just rode away Mr. Dane Grey?"

The negro hesitated.

"Yassuh."

"What's he doing in a British uniform?"

The boy shifted his great shoulders uneasily and looked aside.

"I don't know, suh—I don't know nuttin'."

Erskine knew he was lying, but respected his loyalty.

"Go tell Miss Barbara I'm here and then feed my horse."

"Yassuh."

Ephraim went swiftly and Erskine followed along the hedge and through the rose-bushes to the kitchen door, where Barbara's faithful old Mammy was waiting for him with a smile of welcome but with deep trouble in her eyes.

"I done tol' Miss Barbary, suh. She's waitin' fer yuh in de hall."

Barbara, standing in the hall doorway, heard his step.

"Erskine!" she cried softly, and she came to meet him, with both hands outstretched, and raised her lovely face to be kissed. "What are you doing here?"

"I am on my way to join General Lafayette."

"But you will be captured. It is dangerous. The country is full of British soldiers."

"So I know," Erskine said dryly.

"When did you get here?"

"Twenty minutes ago. I would not have been welcome just then. I waited in the hedge. I saw you had company."

"Did you see them?" she faltered.

"I even recognized one of them." Barbara sank into a chair, her elbow on one arm, her chin in her hand, her face turned, her eyes looking outdoors. She said nothing, but the toe of her slipper began to tap the floor gently. There was no further use for indirection or concealment.

"Barbara," Erskine said with some sternness, and his tone quickened the tapping of the slipper and made her little mouth tighten, "what does all this mean?"

"Did you see," she answered, without looking at him, "that the crops were all destroyed and the cattle and horses were all gone?"

"Why did they spare the house?" The girl's bosom rose with one quick, defiant intake of breath, and for a moment she held it.

"Dane Grey saved our home."

"How?"

"He had known Colonel Tarleton in London and had done something for him over there."

"How did he get in communication with Colonel Tarleton when he was an officer in

the American army?" The girl would not answer.

"Was he taken prisoner?" Still she was silent, for the sarcasm in Erskine's voice was angering her.

"He fought once under Benedict Arnold—perhaps he is fighting with him now."

"No!" she cried hotly.

"Then he must be a——"

She did not allow him to utter the word.

"Why Mr. Grey is in British uniform is his secret—not mine."

"And why he is here is—yours."

"Exactly!" she flamed. "You are a soldier. Learn what you want to know from him. You are my cousin, but you are going beyond the rights of blood. I won't stand it—I won't stand it—from anybody."

"I don't understand you, Barbara—I don't know you. That last time it was Grey, you—and now—" He paused and, in spite of herself, her eyes flashed toward the door. Erskine saw it, drew himself erect, bowed and strode straight out. Nor did the irony of the situation so much as cross his mind—that he should be turned from his own home by the

woman he loved and to whom he had given that home. Nor did he look back—else he might have seen her sink, sobbing, to the floor.

When he turned the corner of the house old Mammy and Ephraim were waiting for him at the kitchen door.

"Get Firefly, Ephraim!" he said sharply.

"Yassuh!"

At the first sight of his face Mammy had caught her hands together at her breast.

"You ain't gwine, Marse Erskine," she said tremulously. "You ain't gwine away?"

"Yes, Mammy—I must."

"You an' Miss Barbary been quoilin', Marse Erskine—you been quoilin'"—and without waiting for an answer she went on passionately: "Ole Marse an' young Marse an' Marse Hugh done gone, de niggahs all gone, an' nobody lef' but me an' Ephraim—nobody lef' but me an' Ephraim—to give dat little chile one crumb o' comfort. Nobody come to de house but de redcoats an' dat mean Dane Grey, an' ev'y time he come he leave Miss Barbary cryin' her little heart out. 'Tain't Miss Barbary in dar—hit's some other

pusson. She ain't de same pusson—no, suh. An' lemme tell yu—lemme tell yu—ef some o' de men folks doan come back heah somehow an' look out fer dat little gal—she's a-gwine to run away wid dat mean low-down man whut just rid away from heah in a white uniform." She had startled Erskine now and she knew it.

"Dat man has got little Missus plum' witched, I tell ye—plum' witched. Hit's jes like a snake wid a catbird."

"Men have to fight, Mammy——"

"I doan keer nothin' 'bout de war."

"I'd be captured if I stayed here——"

"All I keer 'bout is my chile in dar——"

"But we'll drive out the redcoats and the whitecoats and I'll come straight here——"

"An' all de men folks leavin' her heah wid nobody but black Ephraim an' her ole Mammy." The old woman stopped her fiery harangue to listen:

"Dar now, heah dat? My chile hollerin' fer her ole Mammy." She turned her unwieldy body toward the faint cry that Erskine's heart heard better than his ears, and Erskine hurried away.

"Ephraim," he said as he swung upon Firefly, "you and Mammy keep a close watch, and if I'm needed here, come for me yourself and come fast."

"Yassuh. Marse Grey is sutn'ly up to some devilmint no which side he fightin' fer. I got a gal oveh on the aige o' de Grey plantation an' she tel' me dat Marse Dane Grey don't wear dat white uniform all de time."

"What's that—what's that?" asked Erskine.

"No, suh. She say he got an udder uniform, same as yose, an' he keeps it at her uncle Sam's cabin an' she's seed him go dar in white an' come out in our uniform, an' al'ays at night, Marse Erskine—al'ays at night."

The negro cocked his ear suddenly:

"Take to de woods quick, Marse Erskine. Horses comin' down the road."

But the sound of coming hoof-beats had reached the woodsman's ears some seconds before the black man heard them, and already Erskine had wheeled away. And Ephraim saw Firefly skim along the edge of a blackened meadow behind its hedge of low trees.

"Gawd!" said the black boy, and he stood watching the road. A band of white-coated troopers was coming in a cloud of dust, and at the head of them rode Dane Grey.

"Has Captain Erskine Dale been here?" he demanded.

Ephraim had his own reason for being on the good side of the questioner, and did not even hesitate.

"Yassuh—he jes' lef'! Dar he goes now!" With a curse Grey wheeled his troopers. At that moment Firefly, with something like the waving flight of a bluebird, was leaping the meadow fence into the woods. The black boy looked after the troopers' dust.

"Gawd!" he said again, with a grin that showed every magnificent tooth in his head. "Jest as well try to ketch a streak o' lightning." And quite undisturbed he turned to tell the news to old Mammy.

XXIV

Up the James rode Erskine, hiding in the woods by day and slipping cautiously along the sandy road by night, circling about Tarleton's camp-fires, or dashing at full speed past some careless sentinel. Often he was fired at, often chased, but with a clear road in front of him he had no fear of capture. On the third morning he came upon a ragged sentinel—an American. Ten minutes later he got his first glimpse of Lafayette, and then he was hailed joyfully by none other than Dave Yandell, Captain Dave Yandell, shorn of his woodsman's dress and panoplied in the trappings of war.

Cornwallis was coming on. The boy, he wrote, cannot escape me. But the boy—Lafayette—did, and in time pursued and forced the Englishman into a *cul-de-sac*. "I have given his lordship the disgrace of a retreat," said Lafayette. And so—Yorktown!

Late in August came the message that put

Washington's great "soul in arms." Rochambeau had landed six thousand soldiers in Connecticut, and now Count de Grasse and a French fleet had sailed for the Chesapeake. General Washington at once resorted to camouflage. He laid out camps ostentatiously opposite New York and in plain sight of the enemy. He made a feigned attack on their posts. Rochambeau moved south and reached the Delaware before the British grasped the Yankee trick. Then it was too late. The windows of Philadelphia were filled with ladies waving handkerchiefs and crying bravoes when the tattered Continentals, their clothes thick with dust but hats plumed with sprigs of green, marched through amid their torn battle-flags and rumbling cannon. Behind followed the French in "gay white uniforms faced with green," and martial music throbbed the air. Not since poor André had devised the "Mischianza" festival had Philadelphia seen such a pageant. Down the Chesapeake they went in transports and were concentrated at Williamsburg before the close of September. Cornwallis had erected works against the

boy, for he knew nothing of Washington and Count de Grasse, nor Mad Anthony and General Nelson, who were south of the James to prevent escape into North Carolina.

"To your goodness," the boy wrote to Washington, "I am owning the most beautiful prospect I may ever behold."

Then came de Grasse, who drove off the British fleet, and the mouth of the net was closed.

Cornwallis heard the cannon and sent Clinton to appeal for help, but the answer was Washington himself at the head of his army. And then the joyous march.

"'Tis our first campaign!" cried the French gayly, and the Continentals joyfully answered:

"'Tis our last!"

At Williamsburg the allies gathered, and with Washington's army came Colonel Dale, now a general, and young Captain Harry Dale, who had brought news from Philadelphia that was of great interest to Erskine Dale. In that town Dane Grey had been a close intimate of André, and that intimacy

had been the cause of much speculation since. He had told Dave of his mother and Early Morn, and Dave had told him gravely that he must go get them after the campaign was over and bring them to the fort in Kentucky. If Early Morn still refused to come, then he must bring his mother, and he reckoned grimly that no mouth would open in a word that could offend her. Erskine also told of Red Oaks and Dane Grey, but Dave must tell nothing to the Dales—not yet, if ever.

In mid-September Washington came, and General Dale had but one chance to visit Barbara. General Dale was still weak from a wound and Barbara tried unavailingly to keep him at home. Erskine's plea that he was too busy to go with them aroused Harry's suspicions, that were confirmed by Barbara's manner and reticence, and he went bluntly to the point:

"What is the trouble, cousin, between you and Barbara?"

"Trouble?"

"Yes. You wouldn't go to Red Oaks and Barbara did not seem surprised. Is Dane Grey concerned?"

"Yes."

Harry looked searchingly at his cousin: "I pray to God that I may soon meet him face to face."

"And I," said Erskine quietly, "pray to God that you do not—not until after I have met him first." Barbara had not told, he thought, nor should he—not yet. And Harry, after a searching look at his cousin, turned away.

They marched next morning at daybreak. At sunset of the second day they bivouacked within two miles of Yorktown and the siege began. The allied line was a crescent, with each tip resting on the water—Lafayette commanding the Americans on the right, the French on the left under Rochambeau. De Grasse, with his fleet, was in the bay to cut off approach by water. Washington himself put the match to the first gun, and the mutual cannonade of three or four days began. The scene was "sublime and stupendous."

Bombshells were seen "crossing each other's path in the air, and were visible in the form of a black ball by day, but in the night they

appeared like a fiery meteor, with a blazing tail most beautifully brilliant. They ascended majestically from the mortar to a certain altitude and gradually descended to the spot where they were destined to execute their work of destruction. When a shell fell it wheeled around, burrowed, and excavated the earth to a considerable extent and, bursting, made dreadful havoc around. When they fell in the river they threw up columns of water like spouting monsters of the deep. Two British men-of-war lying in the river were struck with hot shot and set on fire, and the result was full of terrible grandeur. The sails caught and the flames ran to the tops of the masts, resembling immense torches. One fled like a mountain of fire toward the bay and was burned to the water's edge."

General Nelson, observing that the gunners were not shooting at Nelson House because it was his own, got off his horse and directed a gun at it with his own hand. And at Washington's headquarters appeared the venerable Secretary Nelson, who had left the town with the permission of Cornwallis and now "related with a serene visage what had

been the effect of our batteries." It was nearly the middle of October that the two redoubts projecting beyond the British lines and enfilading the American intrenchments were taken by storm. One redoubt was left to Lafayette and his Americans, the other to Baron de Viomenil, who claimed that his grenadiers were the men for the matter in hand. Lafayette stoutly argued the superiority of his Americans, who, led by Hamilton, carried their redoubt first with the bayonet, and sent the Frenchman an offer of help. The answer was:

"I will be in mine in five minutes." And he was, Washington watching the attack anxiously:

"The work is done and well done."

And then the surrender:

The day was the 19th of October. The victors were drawn up in two lines a mile long on the right and left of a road that ran through the autumn fields south of Yorktown. Washington stood at the head of his army on the right, Rochambeau at the head of the French on the left. Behind on both sides was a great crowd of people to watch

the ceremony. Slowly out of Yorktown marched the British colors, cased drums beating a significant English air:

"The world turned topsyturvy."

Lord Cornwallis was sick. General O'Hara bore my lord's sword. As he approached, Washington saluted and pointed to General Lincoln, who had been treated with indignity at Charleston. O'Hara handed the sword to Lincoln. Lincoln at once handed it back and the surrender was over. Between the lines the British marched on and stacked arms in a near-by field. Some of them threw their muskets on the ground, and a British colonel bit the hilt of his sword from rage.

As Tarleton's legion went by, three pairs of eyes watched eagerly for one face, but neither Harry nor Captain Dave Yandell saw Dane Grey—nor did Erskine Dale.

XXV

To Harry and Dave, Dane Grey's absence was merely a mystery—to Erskine it brought foreboding and sickening fear. General Dale's wound having opened afresh, made travelling impossible, and Harry had a slight bayonet-thrust in the shoulder. Erskine determined to save them all the worry possible and to act now as the head of the family himself. He announced that he must go straight back at once to Kentucky and Captain Clark. Harry stormed unavailingly and General Dale pleaded with him to stay, but gave reluctant leave. To Dave he told his fears and Dave vehemently declared he, too, would go along, but Erskine would not hear of it and set forth alone.

Slowly enough he started, but with every mile suspicion and fear grew the faster and he quickened Firefly's pace. The distance to Williamsburg was soon covered, and skirting the town, he went on swiftly for Red Oaks. Suppose he were too late, but even if he were

not too late, what should he do, what could he do? Firefly was sweeping into a little hollow now, and above the beating of her hoofs in the sandy road, a clink of metal reached his ears beyond the low hill ahead, and Erskine swerved aside into the bushes. Some one was coming, and apparently out of the red ball of the sun hanging over that hill sprang a horseman at a dead run—black Ephraim on the horse he had saved from Tarleton's men. Erskine pushed quickly out into the road.

"Stop!" he cried, but the negro came thundering blindly on, as though he meant to ride down anything in his way. Firefly swerved aside, and Ephraim shot by, pulling in with both hands and shouting:

"Marse Erskine! Yassuh, yassuh! Thank Gawd you'se come." When he wheeled he came back at a gallop—nor did he stop.

"Come on, Marse Erskine!" he cried. "No time to waste. Come on, suh!"

With a few leaps Firefly was abreast, and neck and neck they ran, while the darky's every word confirmed the instinct and reason that had led Erskine where he was.

"Yassuh, Miss Barbary gwine to run away wid dat mean white man. Yassuh, dis very night."

"When did he get here?"

"Dis mawnin'. He been pesterin' her an' pleadin' wid her all day an' she been cryin' her heart out, but Mammy say she's gwine wid him. 'Pears like she can't he'p herse'f."

"Is he alone?"

"No, suh, he got an orficer an' four sojers wid him."

"How did they get away?"

"He say as how dey was on a scoutin' party an' 'scaped."

"Does he know that Cornwallis has surrendered?"

"Oh, yassuh, he tol' Miss Barbary dat. Dat's why he says he got to git away right now an' she got to go wid him right now."

"Did he say anything about General Dale and Mr. Harry?"

"Yassuh, he say dat dey's all right an' dat dey an' you will be hot on his tracks. Dat's why Mammy tol' me to ride like de debbil an' hurry you on, suh." And Ephraim had ridden like the devil, for his horse was lath-

ered with foam and both were riding that way now, for the negro was no mean horseman and the horse he had saved was a thoroughbred.

"Dis arternoon," the negro went on, "he went ovah to dat cabin I tol' you 'bout an' got dat American uniform. He gwine to tell folks on de way dat dem udders is his prisoners an' he takin' dem to Richmond. Den dey gwine to sep'rate an' he an' Miss Barbary gwine to git married somewhur on de way an' dey goin' on an' sail fer England, fer he say if he git captured folks'll won't let him be prisoner o' war—dey'll jes up an' shoot him. An' dat skeer Miss Barbary mos' to death an' he'p make her go wid him. Mammy heah'd ever' word dey say."

Erskine's brain was working fast, but no plan would come. They would be six against him, but no matter—he urged Firefly on. The red ball from which Ephraim had leaped had gone down now. The chill autumn darkness was settling, but the moon was rising full and glorious over the black expanse of trees when the lights of Red Oaks first twinkled ahead. Erskine pulled in.

"Ephraim!"

"Yassuh. You lemme go ahead. You jest wait in dat thicket next to de corner o' de big gyarden. I'll ride aroun' through de fields an' come into the barnyard by de back gate. Dey won't know I been gone. Den I'll come to de thicket an' tell you de whole lay o' de land."

Erskine nodded.

"Hurry!"

"Yassuh."

The negro turned from the road through a gate, and Erskine heard the thud of his horse's hoofs across the meadow turf. He rode on slowly, hitched Firefly as close to the edge of the road as was safe, and crept to the edge of the garden, where he could peer through the hedge. The hall-door was open and the hallway lighted; so was the dining-room; and there were lights in Barbara's room. There were no noises, not even of animal life, and no figures moving about or in the house. What could he do? One thing at least, no matter what happened to him—he could number Dane Grey's days and make this night his last on earth. It would probably

be his own last night, too. Impatiently he crawled back to the edge of the road. More quickly than he expected, he saw Ephraim's figure slipping through the shadows toward him.

"Dey's jus' through supper," he reported. "Miss Barbary didn't eat wid 'em. She's up in her room. Dat udder orficer been stormin' at Marse Grey an' hurryin' him up. Mammy been holdin' de little Missus back all she can. She say she got to make like she heppin' her pack. De sojers down dar by de wharf playin' cards an' drinkin'. Dat udder man been drinkin' hard. He got his head on de table now an' look like he gone to sleep."

"Ephraim," said Erskine quickly, "go tell Mr. Grey that one of his men wants to see him right away at the sun-dial. Tell him the man wouldn't come to the house because he didn't want the others to know—that he has something important to tell him. When he starts down the path you run around the hedge and be on hand in the bushes."

"Yassuh," and the boy showed his teeth in a comprehending smile. It was not long be-

fore he saw Grey's tall figure easily emerge from the hall-door and stop full in the light. He saw Ephraim slip around the corner and Grey move to the end of the porch, doubtless in answer to the black boy's whispered summons. For a moment the two figures were motionless and then Erskine began to tingle acutely from head to foot. Grey came swiftly down the great path, which was radiant with moonlight. As Grey neared the dial Erskine moved toward him, keeping in a dark shadow, but Grey saw him and called in a low tone but sharply:

"Well, what is it?" With two paces more Erskine stepped out into the moonlight with his cocked pistol at Grey's breast.

"This," he said quietly. "Make no noise —and don't move." Grey was startled, but he caught his control instantly and without fear.

"You are a brave man, Mr. Grey, and so, for that matter, is—Benedict Arnold."

"Captain Grey," corrected Grey insolently.

"I do not recognize your rank. To me you are merely Traitor Grey."

"You are entitled to unusual freedom of speech—under the circumstances."

"Make no noise, and don't move"

"I shall grant you the same freedom," Erskine replied quickly—"in a moment. You are my prisoner, Mr. Grey. I could lead you to your proper place at the end of a rope, but I have in mind another fate for you which perhaps will be preferable to you and maybe one or two others. Mr. Grey, I tried once to stab you—I knew no better and have been sorry ever since. You once tried to murder me in the duel and you did know better. Doubtless you have been sorry ever since—that you didn't succeed. Twice you have said that you would fight me with anything, any time, any place." Grey bowed slightly. "I shall ask you to make those words good and I shall accordingly choose the weapons." Grey bowed again. "Ephraim!" The boy stepped from the thicket.

"Ah," breathed Grey, "that black devil!"

"Ain' you gwine to shoot him, Marse Erskine?"

"Ephraim!" said Erskine, "slip into the hall very quietly and bring me the two rapiers on the wall." Grey's face lighted up.

"And, Ephraim," he called, "slip into the dining-room and fill Captain Kilburn's glass." He turned with a wicked smile.

"Another glass and he will be less likely to interrupt. Believe me, Captain Dale, I shall take even more care now than you that we shall not be disturbed. I am delighted." And now Erskine bowed.

"I know more of your career than you think, Grey. You have been a spy as well as a traitor. And now you are crowning your infamy by weaving some spell over my cousin and trying to carry her away in the absence of her father and brother, to what unhappiness God only can know. I can hardly hope that you appreciate the honor I am doing you."

"Not as much as I appreciate your courage and the risk you are taking."

Erskine smiled.

"The risk is perhaps less than you think."

"You have not been idle?"

"I have learned more of my father's swords than I knew when we used them last."

"I am glad—it will be more interesting." Erskine looked toward the house and moved impatiently.

"My brother officer has dined too well," noted Grey placidly, "and the rest of my—er

—retinue are gambling. We are quite secure."

"Ah!" Erskine breathed—he had seen the black boy run down the steps with something under one arm and presently Ephraim was in the shadow of the thicket:

"Give one to Mr. Grey, Ephraim, and the other to me. I believe you said on that other occasion that there was no choice of blades?"

"Quite right," Grey answered, skilfully testing his bit of steel.

"Keep well out of the way, Ephraim," warned Erskine, "and take this pistol. You may need it, if I am worsted, to protect yourself."

"Indeed, yes," returned Grey, "and kindly instruct him not to use it to protect *you*." For answer Erskine sprang from the shadow —discarding formal courtesies.

"*En garde!*" he called sternly.

The two shining blades clashed lightly and quivered against each other in the moonlight like running drops of quicksilver.

Grey was cautious at first, trying out his opponent's increase in skill:

"You have made marked improvement."

"Thank you," smiled Erskine.

"Your wrist is much stronger."

"Naturally." Grey leaped backward and parried just in time a vicious thrust that was like a dart of lightning.

"Ah! A Frenchman taught you that."

"A Frenchman taught me all the little I know."

"I wonder if he taught you how to meet this."

"He did," answered Erskine, parrying easily and with an answering thrust that turned Grey suddenly anxious. Constantly Grey manœuvred to keep his back to the moon, and just as constantly Erskine easily kept him where the light shone fairly on both. Grey began to breathe heavily.

"I think, too," said Erskine, "that my wind is a little better than yours—would you like a short resting-spell?"

From the shadow Ephraim chuckled, and Grey snapped:

"Make that black devil——"

"Keep quiet, Ephraim!" broke in Erskine sternly. Again Grey manœuvred for the moon, to no avail, and Erskine gave warning:

"Try that again and I will put that moon in your eyes and keep it there." Grey was getting angry now and was beginning to pant.

"Your wind *is* short," said Erskine with mock compassion. "I will give you a little breathing-spell presently."

Grey was not wasting his precious breath now and he made no answer.

"Now!" said Erskine sharply, and Grey's blade flew from his hand and lay like a streak of silver on the dewy grass. Grey rushed for it.

"Damn you!" he raged, and wheeled furiously—patience, humor, and caution quite gone—and they fought now in deadly silence. Ephraim saw the British officer appear in the hall and walk unsteadily down the steps as though he were coming down the path, but he dared not open his lips. There was the sound of voices, and it was evident that the game had ended in a quarrel and the players were coming up the river-bank toward them. Erskine heard, but if Grey did he at first gave no sign—he was too much concerned with the death that faced him. Suddenly Erskine knew that Grey had heard, for the fear in his

face gave way to a diabolic grin of triumph and he lashed suddenly into defense—if he could protect himself only a little longer! Erskine had delayed the finishing-stroke too long and he must make it now. Grey gave way step by step—parrying only. The blades flashed like tiny bits of lightning. Erskine's face, grim and inexorable, brought the sick fear back into Grey's, and Erskine saw his enemy's lips open. He lunged then, his blade went true, sank to the hilt, and Grey's warped soul started on its way with a craven cry for help. Erskine sprang back into the shadows and snatched his pistol from Ephraim's hand:

"Get out of the way now. Tell them I did it."

Once he looked back. He saw Barbara at the hall-door with old Mammy behind her. With a running leap he vaulted the hedge, and, hidden in the bushes, Ephraim heard Firefly's hoofs beating ever more faintly the sandy road.

XXVI

Yorktown broke the British heart, and General Dale, still weak from wounds, went home to Red Oaks. It was not long before, with gentle inquiry, he had pieced out the full story of Barbara and Erskine and Dane Grey, and wisely he waited his chance with each phase of the situation. Frankly he told her first of Grey's dark treachery, and the girl listened with horrified silence, for she would as soon have distrusted that beloved father as the heavenly Father in her prayers. She left him when he finished the story and he let her go without another word. All day she was in her room and at sunset she gave him her answer, for she came to him dressed in white, knelt by his chair, and put her head in his lap. And there was a rose in her hair.

"I have never understood about myself and—and that man," she said, "and I never will."

"I do," said the general gently, "and I understand you through my sister who was so

like you. Erskine's father was as indignant as Harry is now, and I am trying to act toward you as my father did toward her." The girl pressed her lips to one of his hands.

"I think I'd better tell you the whole story now," said General Dale, and he told of Erskine's father, his wildness and his wanderings, his marriage, and the capture of his wife and the little son by the Indians, all of which she knew, and the girl wondered why he should be telling her again. The general paused:

"You know Erskine's mother was not killed. He found her." The girl looked up amazed and incredulous.

"Yes," he went on, "the white woman whom he found in the Indian village was his mother."

"Father!" She lifted her head quickly, leaned back with hands caught tight in front of her, looked up into his face—her own crimsoning and paling as she took in the full meaning of it all. Her eyes dropped.

"Then," she said slowly, "that Indian girl —Early Morn—is his half-sister. Oh, oh!" A great pity flooded her heart and eyes.

"Why didn't Erskine take them away from the Indians?"

"His mother wouldn't leave them." And Barbara understood.

"Poor thing—poor thing!"

"I think Erskine is going to try now."

"Did you tell him to bring them here?" The general put his hand on her head.

"I hoped you would say that. I did, but he shook his head."

"Poor Erskine!" she whispered, and her tears came. Her father leaned back and for a moment closed his eyes.

"There is more," he said finally. "Erskine's father was the eldest brother—and Red Oaks——"

The girl sprang to her feet, startled, agonized, shamed: "Belongs to Erskine," she finished with her face in her hands. "God pity me," she whispered, "I drove him from his own home."

"No," said the old general with a gentle smile. He was driving the barb deep, but sooner or later it had to be done.

"Look here!" He pulled an old piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to her.

Her wide eyes fell upon a rude boyish scrawl and a rude drawing of a buffalo pierced by an arrow:

"It make me laugh. I have no use. I give hole dam plantashun Barbara."

"Oh!" gasped the girl and then—"where is he?"

"Waiting at Williamsburg to get his discharge." She rushed swiftly down the steps, calling:

"Ephraim! Ephraim!"

And ten minutes later the happy, grinning Ephraim, mounted on the thoroughbred, was speeding ahead of a whirlwind of dust with a little scented note in his battered slouch hat:

"You said you would come whenever I wanted you. I want you to come now.

"BARBARA."

The girl would not go to bed, and the old general from his window saw her like some white spirit of the night motionless on the porch. And there through the long hours she sat. Once she rose and started down the

great path toward the sun-dial, moving slowly through the flowers and moonlight until she was opposite a giant magnolia. Where the shadow of it touched the light on the grass, she had last seen Grey's white face and scarlet breast. With a shudder she turned back. The night whitened. A catbird started the morning chorus. The dawn came and with it Ephraim. The girl waited where she was. Ephraim took off his battered hat.

"Marse Erskine done gone, Miss Barbary," he said brokenly. "He done gone two days."

The girl said nothing, and there the old general found her still motionless—the torn bits of her own note and the torn bits of Erskine's scrawling deed scattered about her feet.

XXVII

On the summit of Cumberland Gap Erskine Dale faced Firefly to the east and looked his last on the forests that swept unbroken back to the river James. It was all over for him back there and he turned to the wilder depths, those endless leagues of shadowy woodlands, that he would never leave again. Before him was one vast forest. The trees ran from mountain-crest to river-bed, they filled valley and rolling plain, and swept on in sombre and melancholy wastes to the Mississippi. Around him were birches, pines, hemlocks, and balsam firs. He dropped down into solemn, mysterious depths filled with oaks, chestnuts, hickories, maples, beeches, walnuts, and gigantic poplars. The sun could not penetrate the leafy-roofed archway of that desolate world. The tops of the mighty trees merged overhead in a mass of tent-like foliage and the spaces between the trunks were choked with underbrush. And he rode on and on through the gray aisles of the forest

in a dim light that was like twilight at high noon.

At Boonesborough he learned from the old ferryman that, while the war might be coming to an end in Virginia, it was raging worse than ever in Kentucky. There had been bloody Indian forays, bloody white reprisals, fierce private wars, and even then the whole border was in a flame. Forts had been pushed westward even beyond Lexington, and 1782 had been Kentucky's year of blood. Erskine pushed on, and ever grew his hopelessness. The British had drawn all the savages of the Northwest into the war. As soon as the snow was off the ground the forays had begun. Horses were stolen, cabins burned, and women and children were carried off captive. The pioneers had been confined to their stockaded forts, and only small bands of riflemen sallied out to patrol the country. Old Jerome Sanders's fort was deserted. Old Jerome had been killed. Twenty-three widows were at Harrodsburg filing the claims of dead husbands, and among them were Polly Conrad and Honor Sanders. The people were expecting an attack in great force from the

Indians led by the British. At the Blue Licks there had been a successful ambush by the Indians and the whites had lost half their number, among them many brave men and natural leaders of the settlements. Captain Clark was at the mouth of Licking River and about to set out on an expedition and needed men.

Erskine, sure of a welcome, joined him and again rode forth with Clark through the northern wilderness, and this time a thousand mounted riflemen followed them. Clark had been stirred at last from his lethargy by the tragedy of the Blue Licks and this expedition was one of reprisal and revenge; and it was to be the last. The time was autumn and the corn was ripe. The triumphant savages rested in their villages unsuspecting and unafraid, and Clark fell upon them like a whirlwind. Taken by surprise, and startled and dismayed by such evidence of the quick rebirth of power in the beaten whites, the Indians of every village fled at their approach, and Clark put the torch not only to cabin and wigwam but to the fields of standing corn. As winter was coming on, this would

be a sad blow, as Clark intended, to the savages.

Erskine had told the big chief of his mother, and every man knew the story and was on guard that she should come to no harm. A captured Shawnee told them that the Shawnees had got word that the whites were coming, and their women and old men had fled or were fleeing, all, except in a village he had just left—he paused and pointed toward the east where a few wisps of smoke were rising. Erskine turned: "Do you know Kahtoo?"

"He is in that village."

Erskine hesitated: "And the white woman —Gray Dove?"

"She, too, is there."

"And Early Morn?"

"Yes," grunted the savage.

"What does he say?" asked Clark.

"There is a white woman and her daughter in a village, there," said Erskine, pointing in the direction of the smoke.

Clark's voice was announcing the fact to his men. Hastily he selected twenty. "See that no harm comes to them," he cried, and dashed forward. Erskine in advance saw

Black Wolf and a few bucks covering the retreat of some fleeing women. They made a feeble resistance of a volley and they too turned to flee. A white woman emerged from a tent and with great dignity stood, peering with dim eyes. To Clark's amazement Erskine rushed forward and took her in his arms. A moment later Erskine cried:

"My sister, where is she?"

The white woman's trembling lips opened, but before she could answer, a harsh, angry voice broke in haughtily, and Erskine turned to see Black Wolf stalking in, a prisoner between two stalwart woodsmen.

"Early Morn is Black Wolf's squaw. She is gone—" He waved one hand toward the forest.

The insolence of the savage angered Clark, and not understanding what he said, he asked angrily:

"Who is this fellow?"

"He is the husband of my half-sister," answered Erskine gravely.

Clark looked dazed and uncomprehending:

"And that woman?"

"My mother," said Erskine gently.

"Good God!" breathed Clark. He turned quickly and waved the open-mouthed woodsmen away, and Erskine and his mother were left alone. A feeble voice called from a tent near by.

"Old Kahtoo!" said Erskine's mother. "He is dying and he talks of nothing but you —go to him!" And Erskine went. The old man lay trembling with palsy on a buffalo-robe, but the incredible spirit in his wasted body was still burning in his eyes.

"My son," said he, "I knew your voice. I said I should not die until I had seen you again. It is well . . . it is well," he repeated, and wearily his eyes closed. And thus Erskine knew it would be.

XXVIII

That winter Erskine made his clearing on the land that Dave Yandell had picked out for him, and in the centre of it threw up a rude log hut in which to house his mother, for his remembrance of her made him believe that she would prefer to live alone. He told his plans to none.

In the early spring, when he brought his mother home, she said that Black Wolf had escaped and gone farther into the wilderness —that Early Morn had gone with him. His mother seemed ill and unhappy. Erskine, not knowing that Barbara was on her way to find him, started on a hunting-trip. In a few days Barbara arrived and found his mother unable to leave her bed, and Lydia Noe sitting beside her. Harry had just been there to say good-by before going to Virginia.

Barbara was dismayed by Erskine's absence and his mother's look of suffering and extreme weakness, and the touch of her cold fingers. There was no way of reaching her

To his bewilderment he found Barbara at his mother's bedside

son, she said—he did not know of her illness. Barbara told her of Erskine's giving her his inheritance, and that she had come to return it. Meanwhile Erskine, haunted by his mother's sad face, had turned homeward. To his bewilderment, he found Barbara at his mother's bedside. A glance at their faces told him that death was near. His mother held out her hand to him while still holding Barbara's. As in a dream, he bent over to kiss her, and with a last effort she joined their hands, clasping both. A great peace transformed her face as she slowly looked at Barbara and then up at Erskine. With a sigh her head sank lower, and her lovely dimming eyes passed into the final dark.

Two days later they were married. The woodsmen, old friends of Erskine's, were awed by Barbara's daintiness, and there were none of the rude jests they usually flung back and forth. With hearty handshakes they said good-by and disappeared into the mighty forest. In the silence that fell, Erskine spoke of the life before them, of its hardships and dangers, and then of the safety and comfort of Virginia. Barbara smiled:

"You choose the wilderness, and your choice is mine. We will leave the same choice . . ." She flushed suddenly and bent her head.

"To those who come after us," finished Erskine.

THE END.

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